NATION

TN teacher stabbed to death, assailant held

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

GDP may slip to 6.5% due to corporate challenges: ICRA

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Happy that Cheteshwar Pujara isn't here: Hazlewood

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Exit polls say saffron will fly high in Maharashtra & Jharkhand

Axis MyIndia forecasts a victory for the Congress-JMM alliance in J'khand

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Following the close of polling in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, various exit polls have given the clear edge to the BJP-led NDA. While many surveys suggest a significant lead for BJP-led alliances in both states, some indicate an advantage for the Maha Vikas Aghadi coalition in Maharashtra.

Notably, Axis MyIndia forecasts a victory for the Congress-JMM alliance in Jharkhand, projecting 53 of the 81 seats for them, compared to just 25 for the BJP-led NDA coalition. However, most exit polls predict a strong showing for the NDA in Jharkhand and the BJP-led Mahayuti government in Maharashtra.

Voters wait in queues to cast votes in Jharkhand Assembly elections, at Naxal-affected Tundi on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

In the 288-seat Maharashtra Assembly, the majority is secured with 145 seats, while Jharkhand's 81-member Legislative Assembly requires 41 for a majority. The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP alliance currently governs Maharashtra, while the JMM-Congress coalition rules Jharkhand.

The Matrize exit poll estimates the BJP and allies could secure between 150-170 seats in Maharashtra, with a 48 per cent vote share, while predicting 42-47 seats for the NDA in Jharkhand. Conversely, Electoral Edge projects a win for MVA in Maharashtra with 150 seats.

Others such as by P-MARQ, Chanakya Strategies, and Lokpoll, reveal a similar divide, forecasting a close contest between the two alliances in Maharashtra.

Despite the excitement surrounding the exit polls, the Election Commission has raised concerns about their accuracy, as past elections have shown them to be misleading. Counting of votes is set for 23 November. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

THE PREDICTION

MAHARASHTRA: Total seats: 288 | Majority: 145

SOURCE	MAHAYUTI	MVA	OTHERS
People's Pulse	175-195	85-112	7-12
Matrize	150-170	110-130	8-10
P-Marq	137-157	126-146	2-8
Dainik Bhaskar	125-140	135-150	20-25
Times Now	150-167	107-125	13-14

JHARKHAND: Total seats: 81 | Majority: 41

SOURCE	NDA	INDIA	OTHERS
People's Pulse	44-53	25-37	5-9
Matrize	42-47	25-30	1-4
P-Marq	31-40	37-47	1-6
Dainik Bhaskar	37-40	36-39	0-2
Axis India	17-27	49-59	1-6

UP WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN SACK, BJP & SP TRADE BARBS

MAINPURI, 20 NOV

BJP and SP traded barbs after a 23-year-old Dalit woman was found dead in a sack near Kanjara village in UP's Mainpuri on Wednesday.

The victim's family has also alleged that the woman was raped before being killed.

The family of the deceased alleged that a SP leader abducted and killed her for refusing to vote in favour of BJP in Karhal bypoll. Police on Wednesday arrested two people accused by the family in the FIR.

Following the woman's death, her father lodged a complaint at Karhal police station, accusing SP leader Prashant Yadav, a resident of Tapa ki Nagaria, of abducting his daughter on Tuesday. He alleged that Yadav later poisoned his daughter to death with the help of another person named Mohan Katheria.

The issue snowballed into a political controversy with the BJP and the SP trading barbs. "In Karhal, Samajwadi Party leader Prashant Yadav and his associates murdered a Dait girl just because she had refused to vote for the 'cycle' (SP's election symbol). In Mainpuri, the Saifai family and Akhilesh Yadav's goons are again trying to create an atmosphere of terror," BJP's posted on X. "This is a conspiracy to defame SP by BJP, which often engages in such activities. This has nothing to do with the SP," said SP spokesperson Rajendra Choudhary. *—PTI.*

MUSLIMS STOPPED FROM VOTING IN UP; SP FLAYS BJP; EC AXES COPS

LUCKNOW, 20 NOV

Samajwadi Party on Wednesday accused police personnel of deterring some people from casting votes in Uttar Pradesh where bypolls are underway, while the BJP alleged that the faces of some burqa-clad women voters are not matching with their IDs.

Both SP and BJP called for Election Commission (EC) to intervene.

Acting on complaints, EC suspended five police personnel and many others were removed from poll duty for flouting guidelines and stopping electors from casting votes.

Meanwhile, an incident of stone pelting was reported in Kakroli village during voting for the Meerapur following a confrontation between two groups.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Abhishek Singh told reporters that police dispersed the crowd using "mild force". SP President Akhilesh Yadav urged Supreme Court and EC to take immediate cognisance of alleged voter suppression. The party requested the EC earlier to issue instructions that on polling day, police officers are not allowed to check the ID of voters, only polling officers are permitted to do so. He shared a video of party candidate Sumbul Rana from Meerapur in Muzaffarnagar, accusing police of trying to deter peo- ple from voting. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

60% vote in M'rashtra, J'khand sees 68% turnout

MUMBAI, 20 NOV

Maharashtra saw a voter turnout of 60.03 per cent by 5pm on Wednesday in the elections for its 288-member legislative assembly despite incidents of violence, including the vandalism of polling booths and assaults on party workers reported in few areas.

According to the statistics, Gadchiroli district excelled, recording an impressive 69.63 per cent turnout. While Jharkhand reported approximately 68 per cent voter turnout, as voters participated in the second phase of assembly elections across 14,218 polling booths. Jamtara district achieved the highest turnout at 76.16 per cent, maintaining a peaceful polling atmosphere.

People wait in queues to cast their votes in Maharashtra's Nagpur on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

However, in Maharashtra, election day was marred by incidents of violence. A polling booth was vandalised in the Parli assembly constituency, where an NCP (SP) worker was assaulted. The incident involved the destruction of an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and furniture at a polling location in Ghatnandur. Additionally, a local leader from the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) reported being assaulted by BJP supporters in Wardha. Election representatives assured voters that despite the vandalism, the data from damaged EVMs remains secure. Mumbai's Colaba, home to super riches, again exhibited its voter apathy, recording a 41.64 per cent turnout. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Ind candidate dies in booth

An independent candidate from the Beed died when the Maharashtra polls were underway on Wednesday. Balasaheb Shinde, 43, a resident of Beed city, collapsed at the Chhatrapati Shahu Vidyalay polling booth between 2 pm and 3 pm. *—PTI*

Manipur extends internet suspension

IMPHAL, 20 NOV

The Manipur government on Wednesday extended suspension of mobile internet services for three more days in seven districts, according to an order. Amid escalating violence, the administration suspended the services on 16 November for two days to prevent anti-social elements from spreading content that might create law and order problems. It was extended for two more days on Monday. "The state government decided to continue suspension of mobile internet services in Imphal West, Imphal East, Kakching, Bishnupur, Thoubal, Churachandpur and Kangpokpi of Manipur for another three days," the order said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

India ranks 10th in top climate performers: Report

BAKU, 20 NOV

India has secured the 10th position in the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2025, a report released during the annual UN climate conference indicates. Although India has dropped two spots compared to last year, its low per capita emissions and rapid adoption of renewable energy have contributed to its high ranking among over 60 assessed countries. The report, published by Germanwatch, New Climate Institute, and Climate Action Network International, found that the top three positions remain unoccupied, highlighting the challenges faced by major emitters, with China and the US languishing at 55th and 57th place. *—PTI*

MODI HANDED KEYS TO GUYANESE CITY

GEORGETOWN, 20 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who arrived in Guyana on Wednesday – the first visit by an Indian head of the state in more than 50 years — said his visit "will deepen the friendship between nations." In an unprecedented gesture, Modi was handed over the 'Key to the City of Georgetown', which officials described as a testament of close India-Guyana ties. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

India, China agree to work on rebuilding mutual trust

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

India and China on Wednesday agreed to work towards a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh calling for drawing lessons from the "unfortunate border clashes" of 2020 during talks with his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun.

The two Defence Ministers met in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, weeks after Indian and Chinese militaries completed disengagement of troops from two last face-off points in eastern Ladakh.

=The Singh-Dong meeting took place on the sidelines of a conclave of 10-nation ASEAN grouping. Indian and Chinese militaries completed the disengagement exercise in Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh late last month after the two sides reached an agreement following a series of negotiations to resolve the festering border row. *—PTI*

TO BE CANCELLED

K'taka identifies 22.63 lakh ineligible BPL cardholders

BENGALURU/KOLAR, 20 NOV

The Karnataka government has identified 22.63 lakh ineligible Below Poverty Line (BPL) cardholders in the state, with plans to revise the list, official sources said on Wednesday.

A survey conducted in August this year uncovered 22,62,482 ineligible BPL cardholders. The government is now considering cancelling these cards, triggering concerns about the withdrawal of key welfare benefits for numerous families.

These include the distribution of 10 kg of food grains per family member per month under the Anna Bhagya scheme and the Rs 2,000 monthly allowance provided to women heads of BPL families under the Congress-led government's Gruha Lakshmi scheme. Defending the move, Karnataka's Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Affairs Minister KH Muniyappa stated that southern states typically do not have more than 50 per cent of their population categorised as BPL cardholders. A Bengaluru-based BPL cardholder expressed concern after discovering that her ration card had been canceled during a visit to a government-run ration shop.

She feared her newborn daughter would lose access to benefits under the Bhagya Lakshmi scheme, aimed at reducing female foeticide, supporting education, and ensuring financial empowerment for girls. *—PTI*

K'taka inked MoUs worth ₹46K cr: CM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the state has prioritised economic development by signing 21 MoUs with various organisations, bringing in investments worth Rs 46,375 crore with potential to generate 27,170 new jobs, since his government assumed office last year. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Amid smog, Delhi starts 50% work from home policy

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Half of the staff in Delhi government offices will work from home while private organisations have been urged to follow suit amid high air pollution in the national capital.

However, essential services such as healthcare, sanitation, public transport, fire services, law enforcement, power supply, water treatment, and emergency response operations will continue to work in full capacity to ensure public services remain unaffected.

Nearly 80 departments and different agencies in the Delhi government, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, employ approximately 1.4 lakh people. Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai, in a post on X, said 50 per cent of the government staff would work from home. He also urged private offices to implement similar measures to help mitigate the city's air pollution crisis. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

END OF AN ERA

An emotional Nadal retires at Davis Cup

PHOTO: PTI

MALAGA, 20 NOV

Rafael Nadal bit his lower lip and his reddened eyes welled with tears as he stood alongside his Davis Cup teammates for Spain's national anthem before what everyone knew might be the last match of his career.

Hours after Nadal's 6-4, 6-4 loss to Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands was over, the evening did turn out to represent the 22-time Grand Slam champion's farewell to professional tennis, because the Dutch eliminated the Spaniards in the quarterfinals just after midnight.

And it was during an on-court, post-match ceremony to honour Nadal that he cried and cried, at the singsong chorus of "Raaafaaa" from the spectators, at the video showing highlights from his more than two decades on tour.

"The titles, the numbers, are there, so people probably know that, but the way I would like to be remembered is as a good person from a small village in Mallorca," the 38-year-old Nadal said.

The result put a stop to his 29-match winning streak in Davis Cup singles. The only other blemish on his record, which stood at 29-1 entering Tuesday, came in his 2004 debut.

"I lost my first match in the Davis Cup, and I lost my last one," Nadal said with a wide grin. "So we close the circle." *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

INDIA BEATS CHINA TO WIN 3RD ACT

RAJGIR, 20 NOV

In a thrilling final, India triumphed over Olympic silver medallists China, retains the women's Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) hockey title with a narrow 1-0 thanks to 17-year-old young striker Deepika scoring the decisive goal in the 31st minute from a penalty corner.

Deepik demonstrated exceptional skill with a fine reverse hit and went on to conclude the tournament as the top scorer, netting 11 goals.

India had previously stunned China with a convincing 3-0 win in the league stages, and this victory marks India's third title in the ACT, equalling South Korea as the most successful teams in the tournament's history.

India's Bichu Devi Kharibam made a remarkable diving save to deny an early Chinese attempt, while Deepika had a chance to extend the lead but saw her subsequent penalty stroke saved by Chinese keeper Li Ting. Despite a high-press approach from China, India's defence held firm. *—PTI*

State inks MoUs for ₹46,375 cr investments: CM

CM says with 21 MoUs & potential to generate 27,170 new jobs, K'taka aims to becoming a global leader

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the state has prioritised economic development by signing 21 MoUs with various organisations, bringing in investments worth Rs 46,375 crore with potential to generate 27,170 new jobs, since his government assumed office last year.

Speaking at the inauguration of the 78th Annual Technical Meet of the Indian Institute of Metals (IIM), he said Bengaluru stands as a symbol of technological and industrial progress.

"It is only fitting that we host this prestigious event, bringing together over 1,700 experts dedicated to shaping the future of metals and materials," he said.

The Chief Minister said the theme, "Transformational Technologies in Materials and Manufacturing," of the three-day conclave underscores the critical need to envision and implement pioneering solutions to navigate the complexities of a rapidly evolving world.

"The materials and manufacturing sectors are pillars of economic growth and national resilience. Their influence extends beyond industry, touching every sphere of our collective progress," he said.

"As part of our commitment to a greener future, Karnataka is prioritising the adoption of green technologies across various industries, including metals and materials manufacturing. This helps drive sustainable practices while maintaining competitiveness on a global scale," Siddaramaiah said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, DyCM DK Shivakumar, Large & Medium Industries Minister MB Patil and JSW Group Chairman Sajjan Jindal during the inauguration of 78th Annual Technical Meeting **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Siddaramaiah said Karnataka remains dedicated to becoming a global leader in advanced manufacturing. "Our policies champion innovation, sustainability, and inclusive development, setting the stage for robust industry growth."

"A total of 669 investment projects have received approval from the state-level single-window committees, leading to a projected investment of Rs 90,027 crore and the creation of employment opportunities for approximately 1,73,741 people," he said.

Speaking at the event, IIM President and Chairman of JSW Group, Sajjan Jindal said that a conference such as IIM-ATM 2024 is vital for strengthening our ecosystem, fostering collaboration, exchanging ideas and recognising excellence. *—PTI*

CM seeks appointment with FM to discuss NABARD loan reduction

Bengaluru, 20 Nov

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said he has sought an appointment with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to discuss the "reduction" in loan amount to the state this year, from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).The Chief Minister will be travelling to the national capital tonight."There is a launch of Nandini products in Delhi, so I'm going. I have also sought appointment with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, because NABARD loan to the state this year has been reduced. Last year, Rs 5,600 crore was given, this year it is Rs 2,340 crore. It has been reduced by 58 per cent," Siddaramaiah said.Speaking to reporters here, he noted that the NABARD comes under the Finance Ministry. He is scheduled to launch Nandini dairy products in Delhi on Thursday.

State pitches 50% mkt share in its space policy

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

To boost Karnataka's contribution to 50 per cent of the national market share and transform the state into a global destination for space technologies, the government on Wednesday unveiled a draft space technology policy.

The Draft Karnataka Space Technology Policy, 2024-29 was released at the 27th Bengaluru Tech Summit during the session on space tech and defence. It outlines the Government of Karnataka's overall vision for the space sector and identifies key strategic focus areas.

The draft policy was released by Karnataka IT, Biotechnology and S&T Minister, Priyank Kharge, in presence of ISRO chief S Somanath.

According to the executive

summary of the policy, the state has a mature ecosystem comprising government, private sector, MSMEs, and academic institutions, including around 10 ISRO centers, creating a strong foundation across the space sector value chain.

The policy also highlights that Bengaluru has become the hub for new space companies, with the highest percentage of space tech startups headquartered in the city. These startups have attracted more than USD 150 million in funding to date. *—PTI*

STATE PLEDGES FULL SUPPORT TO INVESTORS, SAYS CM

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

The Karnataka government is committed to offering all possible support to investors leveraging its industry-friendly environment and talent pool in the State, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Wednesday.

During a meeting with British High Commissioner to India, Lindy Cameron, at his home-office 'Krishna', he discussed various issues, highlighting Karnataka's potential for investments.

"Under the government's ambitious KWIN (Knowledge, Wellness & Innovation) City project, investors can explore further opportunities. Our state's industrial policy is highly progressive, and with excellent air connectivity to most cities, the government is ready to extend full support for investments." *—PTI*

HEALTHCARE STARTUPS SHINE AT TECH SUMMIT 2024

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

Young entrepreneurs in the healthcare industry shared insights into building innovative solutions, addressing challenges, and leveraging technology for growth on the second day of the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2024.

Kavitha Rodrigues, CEO of Theramab Therapeutics, recounted her journey from founding an Indian startup to transitioning into a Delaware-incorporated company in 2016.

"Initially, moving operations abroad was essential for IP protection and securing investor confidence. However, with India's evolving startup ecosystem, abundant talent, and growing investment in research, building from India for global markets is now a feasible strategy," she said.

Rodrigues stressed the need for patient capital to develop novel therapeutics, saying, "Investors must understand that therapies for critically ill patients require time and commitment to yield meaningful results."

The panelists also discussed the role of technology in enhancing operational efficiency and customer engagement.

Rodrigues highlighted Theramab's use of gene libraries and antibody platforms for developing therapeutics, to optimise logistics. *—PTI*

CM to inaugurate Quest Academy School in Mysuru

MYSURU, 20 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will inaugurate the 88th educational institution under the Siddhartha Education Society, Quest Academy School, on 22 November at 11am in Subhash Nagar, Mysuru. Addressing reporters on Wednesday, Dr Vivek Veeraiah, Co-Chairman of Siddhartha Education Society, announced the event and outlined the key participants. Academy will cater to students from Pre-Kindergarten to Class 7 and follow the CBSE syllabus. Admissions for the upcoming academic year will commence soon, added Dr Veeraiah. *—Salar News*

Faction politics won't stop my fight: Ex-MP Pratap

MYSURU, 20 NOV

Former MP Pratap Simha on Wednesday clarified that he does not align with any faction within BJP and remains committed to working as a grassroots party activist, focused on safeguarding the interests of the people. Addressing a press conference, Simha dismissed concerns over being excluded from the three BJP teams formed under Vijayendra, Leader of Opposition R Ashok, and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy for the State-wide "Namma Bhoomi, Namma Hakku" (Our Land, Our Right) campaign against Waqf Board notices. *—Salar News*

ED arrests City man for IT returns, refund 'fraud'

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Enforcement Directorate Wednesday said it has arrested a man from Bengaluru under the anti-money laundering law for allegedly manipulating Income Tax Returns (ITRs) to obtain fraudulent refunds.Dilip BR was taken into custody on 18 November and a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court sent him to ED custody for seven days, the federal agency said in a statement. A probe found that the accused "exploited" vulnerabilities in the 'Kaveri' and 'Jamabandi' portals of Karnataka and Haryana state governments to gather data on non-resident taxpayers who had sold property in India with significant TDS (tax deducted at source) it said. *—PTI*

CM and HM justify Naxal's encounter; reject calls for probe

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday appeared to justify the killing of Maoist leader Vikram Gowda in an encounter with the Anti-Naxal Force (ANF), noting that he faced multiple criminal cases and also chose to ignore the government's direction to lay down arms and join the mainstream.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said Gowda was carrying "deadly" weapons, and rejected calls for a probe into the killing.

Had the ANF not shot him, he would have fired at all of them, Parameshwara said, as he rejected any suspicion surrounding his killing on Monday.

"There is a standing order. We have said that if they

Parameshwara **PHOTO: PTI**

ter.

"You should appreciate it (the encounter). Should Naxalism remain or go?" the Chief Minister asked.

Speaking to reporters, Parameshwara said there are more than 60 cases against Gowda, including murder charges.

"He (Gowda) was carrying a deadly weapon, an automatic machine gun-like weapon. If they (ANF personnel) did not shoot him, he would have fired at them. So I'm told that he was shot at first sight. So there is no need to suspect anything," he said.

To a question on some "Leftists" allegedly targeting the government over the encounter saying that there is no "difference" between Congress and BJP, Parameshwara said it is not the question about the two political parties. *— PTI*

- Home Minister G Parameshwara said Gowda was carrying "deadly" weapons, and rejected calls for a probe into the killing

A CLARION CALL

Women attended a meeting on protection of Shariah and constitutional rights, aimed at raising awareness about Waqf issue. The event was held at Quddus Sab Eidgah Maidan in Bengaluru on Wednesday, organised by All India Muslim Personal Law Board **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

EV showroom owner held after fire kills woman

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

The owner of an electric vehicle showroom in Rajajinagar was arrested on Wednesday in connection with a fire that claimed the life of a 20-year-old woman.

Police identified the accused as 36-year-old Punith Gowda.

He was arrested under Section 106 (death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. After being produced in court, Gowda was granted conditional bail, police said.

According to the police, five to six people were present inside the showroom when the fire broke out.

All of them managed to escape, except for Priya, the cashier, who got trapped. She died from asphyxiation and severe burn injuries.

The fire destroyed over 45 electric scooters. *—PTI*

MUDA case: Snehamayi seeks CBI probe

MYSURU, 20 NOV

RTI activist and MUDA complainant Snehamayi Krishna on Wednesday expressed doubts over the Lokayukta's ability to impartially probe the MUDA scam, citing the agency's jurisdiction under the State government. Krishna announced that he would submit all supporting documents to Karnataka High Court on 26 November, seeking a CBI investigation into the case.

Addressing reporters, Krishna highlighted irregularities during the tenures of former MUDA commissioners DB Natesh and GT Dinesh. He revealed that Lokayukta SP questioned Natesh extensively and also investigated former MUDA chairman D Dhruvakumar on Tuesday regarding the controversial allotment of alternative MUDA sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife, BM Parvathi.

Krishna also alleged suspicious activity involving the Chief Minister's brother-in-law, M Mallikarjunaswamy, an accused in the case.

According to him, Mallikarjunaswamy visited the Lokayukta SP's office at 7.30pm. on Tuesday, staying for over 30 minutes after the prolonged questioning of Natesh.

He filed a complaint with senior Lokayukta officials, questioning why the accused visited at odd hours without a formal notice, which typically requires appearances during regular hours. *—Salar News*

CM's brother-in-law deposes before Lokayukta in MUDA scam

Mysuru, 20 Nov

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy has deposed before the Lokayukta police, which is probing the alleged MUDA site allotment scam. Swamy reached the Lokayukta police office at about 8 pm on Tuesday with documents, Lokayukta sources said. According to sources, the Lokayukta officials sought details pertaining to the bank transactions. In the MUDA case, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his wife Parvathi B M are also accused. The Lokayukta police are probing the allotment of 14 MUDA sites in Mysuru upmarket to Parvathi following a complaint by a social activist Snehamayi Krishna. *—PTI*

Mysuru Bar backs Waqf bill amendments

MYSURU, 20 NOV

Members of the Mysuru Bar Association have voiced their support for the Union government's proposed amendments to the Waqf Bill 2024, following a protest held outside the district court on Wednesday. The Association condemned the state government's action of issuing notices to farmers, alleging that their lands belong to Waqf properties.

The proposed amendments are seen as a means to eradicate corruption in the management of Waqf properties across India. They aim to enhance transparency, accountability, and justice for underprivileged communities. However, the current situation has left many farmers, educational institutions, and religious authorities in distress, particularly as state Waqf boards continue to issue notices impacting landowners.

The Association has called on the government to halt the issuance of these notices and to cease any mutation entries relating to land rights in Revenue Tenancy Certificates (RTCs).

They are also advocating for the annulment of previous mutations made without prior notification to affected farmers, requesting that the government formally inform them about the cessation of these processes. *—Salar News*

CRIME IN MYSURU

BEGGAR HELD FOR KIDNAPPING TODDLER

A 28-year-old woman, Radha, from Hosahalli Mandya Colony, was arrested by Chamarajanagar Police for allegedly kidnapping a two-and-a-half-year-old toddler from the KSRTC bus stand on 14 November. Radha is accused of abducting the child of Anitha, the mother, after befriending her. The accused reportedly used the child for begging in various locations. *—Salar News*

BURGLAR HELD, RS 5.5L RECOVERED

Hunsur Town Police arrested a 35-year-old inter-district burglar, Syed Usman, and recovered stolen goods worth Rs 5.5 lakh, including cash amounting to Rs 1.72 lakh and three vehicles used in the crimes. According to the police, Usman, a resident of Belavatha, Mysuru, confessed during interrogation to stealing gold ornaments and other valuables. He admitted to breaking into a medical shop on Hunsur Bazaar Street and committing thefts across various locations including Mysuru, Bengaluru, Ramanagar, Mandya, Nanjangud, and 18 other places. *—Salar News*

'DON'T RELY ON IMPORTS'

India can make car sensors too: ISRO Chief

BENGALURU, 20 NOV

In a significant call for action, ISRO Chairman S Somanath underlined the urgent need for India to manufacture car sensors domestically rather than relying on imports.

Speaking during a session dedicated to space technology and defence at the Bengaluru Tech Summit, Somanath highlighted the pressing issue of high production costs hindering the viability of local car sensor manufacturing.

He noted, "For car sensors, viability is achievable only if production costs are low and manufacturing is scaled up," pointing to the disparity between India's substantial investment in rocket sensors and the costly production of car sensors.

Somanath **PHOTO: X**

Somanath advocated for enhanced collaboration within the industry and stressed that policy interventions, such as those introduced at the summit, could pave the way for solutions.

The chairman praised the 2020 space sector reforms and the 2023 Space Policy for fostering a favourable ecosystem for private sector growth, stating,

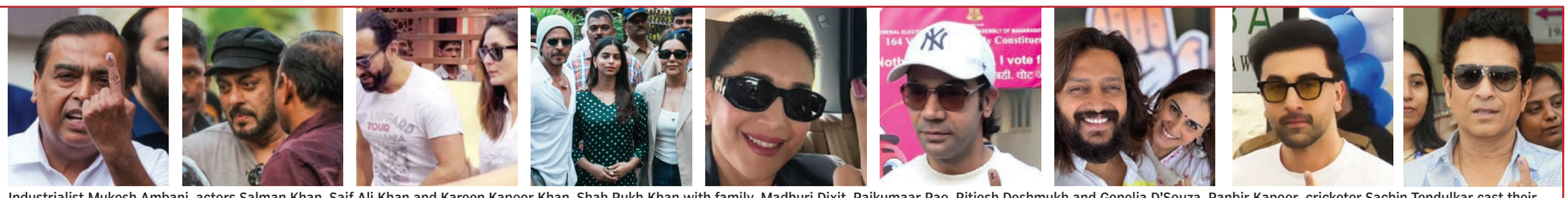
"There is a lot of interest in the sector. I hear from many aspiring to build the next SpaceX in India."

Somanath also reported that five companies are currently engaged in satellite construction, although he acknowledged the challenges posed by a lack of major players and insufficient investment in upstream capabilities.

Furthermore, he underscored the importance of technology transfer from ISRO to the private sector, enabling industries to develop these technologies into viable products and services.

Karnataka Minister for IT, Biotechnology, Science and Technology, Priyank Kharge, revealed that the draft policy aims for Karnataka to capture 50 per cent of the national space market and become a global hub for space technologies. *—PTI*

VOTING GOES GLAM



Industrialist Mukesh Ambani, actors Salman Khan, Saif Ali Khan and Kareen Kapoor Khan, Shah Rukh Khan with family, Madhuri Dixit, Rajkumaar Rao, Ritiesh Deshmukh and Genelia D'Souza, Ranbir Kapoor, cricketer Sachin Tendulkar cast their vote during the Maharashtra Assembly elections on Wednesday

PHOTOS: PTI/ INSTAGRAM

'Bitcoin scam' rocks Maharashtra as CBI issues summons; Sule under fire

Sule denied the charges against her and said she filed complaint with EC

MUMBAI, 20 NOV

The CBI on Wednesday summoned Gaurav Mehta, an audit company employee, to appear before it as soon as possible in connection with the Rs 6,600-crore Gain Bitcoin ponzi scam case, officials said.

The development came a day after Mehta's name cropped up in purported tapes of Maharashtra political leaders discussing the encashment of the cryptocurrency worth crores.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is probing the Gain Bitcoin ponzi "scam" on the directions of the Supreme Court, swung into action hours after the Enforcement Directorate, probing the money laundering aspect of the case, launched raids at the Mehta's residence in Chhattisgarh.

The Supreme Court handed over cases registered against Variable Tech Pvt Ltd across the country to the CBI in December last year.

Bitcoins, a cryptocurrency, are not controlled by any central bank of any country.

The role of Mehta surfaced on Tuesday when the BJP in poll-bound Maharashtra played purported voice notes of NCP (SP) leader and Baramati MP Supriya Sule and Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole, alleging attempts were being made to encash Bitcoins to influence the elections.

The allegations have been denied by Sule and Patole.

Meanwhile, BJP intensified its attack on Sule and Patole. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra also targeted Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi and asked the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha to hold a press conference on the issue. It appears that the money involved so far in this scam is Rs 235 crore, he claimed.

Sule has denied the charges and said she has filed a complaint with the Election Commission and the cybercrime department of the state against the false allegations. She told reporters on Wednesday that she "did not know Gaurav Mehta".

"Familiar tactics of spreading false information to manipulate the righteous voters," she said. *—PTI*

Voters show thier identification cards at a polling station in Nagpur on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

BJP's Tawde dismisses 'cash for votes' claim

MUMBAI, 20 NOV

BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde on Wednesday dismissed the allegations of distributing money to influence voters, saying that he was aware of the rules and not foolish to indulge in such an activity at the hotel of political opponents.

Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (BVA) leader Hitendra Thakur on Tuesday accused Tawde of distributing Rs 5 crore at a hotel in Virar, 60 km from Mumbai, to woo voters. Tawde said he was aware of the rules and regulations.

Leaders of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi have sought a comprehensive investigation by the Election Commission. *—PTI*

Aruna Chitale, the 93-year-old resident of Nagpur who served one month in jail during Emergency, shows her inked finger during the Maharashtra Assembly elections, in Nagpur, on Wednesday. Chitale said she might be old, but that was not a deterrent for her to come out and exercise her democratic right. The woman said she was in jail for one month during Emergency imposed in 1975.

EVM stops working at Nashik

NASHIK, 20 NOV

An EVM stopped working at one of the booths, in Nashik forcing voters to wait briefly with indelible ink on their fingers. Meanwile, in Hingoli election authorities replaced 21 electronic voting machines in Maharashtra's Hingoli assembly constituency after they were found faulty during mock polls, officials said, adding that it did not impact the voting process. *—PTI*

Clean up voters' list, Gadkari tells EC

MUMBAI, 20 NOV

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday urged the Election Commission to address issues in the voter enrolment process, citing irregularities in the voters' list. "The names of some people who have passed away are still in the v o t -ers' list, while those of people who recently enrolled are missing," he said. *—PTI*

Shots fired at Sena nominee's car

SHRIRAMPUR, 20 NOV

Three unidentified people allegedly opened fire at Shiv Sena candidate Bhausaheb Kamble's car in Maharashtra's Shrirampur in the early hours of Wednesday. Three people riding two motorcycles targeted Kamble's car near Ashok Sugar Mills on the day of polling. The bullets, however, didn't hit the car and Kamble, a police official said. *—PTI*

Man wanted in cash-for-votes case held

AHMEDABAD, 20 NOV

A man wanted by the Enforcement Directorate in a 'cash-for-votes' case-linked money laundering investigation in Maharashtra was apprehended at the Ahmedabad international airport on Wednesday. He was intercepted by immigration authorities on the basis of a lookout circular issued by the ED. He was "trying to flee" to Dubai, they said. *—PTI*

POWER GETS INKED

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan, Maharashtra DyCM Devendra Fadnavis, Congress leader Nana Patole, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray with his wife, CM Eknath Shinde, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) chief Raj Thackeray cast their vote during the Maharashtra Assembly elections on Wednesday. Raj voted for his son Amit, who is making his electoral debut ***PHOTOS: PTI***

BJP, SP face off over allegations of stopping Muslim voters in UP

LUCKNOW, 20 NOV

A fierce political faceoff erupted Wednesday between the ruling BJP and main opposition Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh amid the byelections to nine Assembly seats with both parties accusing each other of foul play.

At a presser in Lucknow, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav accused the BJP of misusing the administrative machinery to stop Muslim voters and to secure a win in the bypolls "through manipulation".

Yadav claimed his party had lodged complaints with the Election Commission (EC) regarding "irregularities" in multiple constituencies, including Karhal, Sisamau, Meerapur, Kundarki, Phulpur, and Majhawan.

Countering the opposition party's claims, BJP spokesperson Manish Shukla said the Samajwadi Party and Akhilesh are scared of losing in the ongoing bypolls in Uttar Pradesh.

Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) candidate Mithlesh Pal told reporters that she has been informed about people from outside Meerapur constituency being called in for "bogus voting".

Pal also claimed that bogus voting was being done by "women in burqa".

In Kanpur, SP candidate Naseem Solanki alleged her party voters were complaining of foul play by the administration, and alleging "biased behaviour" by the administration. *—PTI*

SP Party President Akhilesh Yadav shared a video showing a police officer allegedly pointing a gun at a woman during voting in Meerapur ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

BYPOLL TURNOUT

UTTAR PRADESH

KATEHARI 56.89%

KARHAL 54.07%

MEERAPUR 57.12%

GHAZIABAD 33.30%

MAJHAWAN 50.41%

SISHAMAU 49.13%

KHAIR 46.36%

PHULPUR 43.45%

KUNDARKI 57.72%

PUNJAB

GIDDERBAHA 78.10%

DERA BABA NANAK 59.80%

CHABBEWAL (SC) 48.01%

BARNALA 52.70%

KERALA

PALAKKAD 62.25%

UTTARAKHAND

KEDARNATH 57.64%

People wait in a queue to cast votes at a polling station at Jamchuan, during the final phase of Jharkhand Assembly elections, in Ranchi ***PHOTO: PTI***

Peaceful turnout in 38 seats in J'khand

RANCHI, 20 NOV

Jharkhand witnessed peaceful polling in 38 seats in the second and final phase of assembly elections on Wednesday, with 68 per cent of 1.23 crore voters exercising their franchise amid tight security, officials said.

The turnout surpassed the 67.04 per cent voting in 2019, officials said.

With this, elections have concluded for the 81-member Jharkhand assembly. Polling in the first phase of elections to 43 seats on 13 November had seen over 66 per cent of 1.37 crore voters exercising their franchise.

"Approximately 67.71 per cent voter turnout was recorded as per data calculated till 8 pm. Jamtara district topped the chart with 76.16 per cent polling while Bokaro district recorded the lowest at 60.97 per cent," a poll official said.

The overall polling percentage in the state surpassed 63.9 per cent recorded in the 2019 assembly polls, according to the Election Commission.

Polling began at 7am in 14,218 booths across 12 districts and continued till 5pm. However, polling in 31 booths ended at 4pm.

The ruling JMM-led INDIA bloc is seeking to retain power riding on its welfare schemes, while the BJP-headed National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is trying to wrest it.

Chief Electoral Officer K Ravi Kumar said, "The election process was peaceful and remained free of incidents. Two FIRs were lodged for violating secrecy of voting against polling and presiding officers, including one in Gandey." IG (Operations) Amol V Homkar said polling was peaceful and the seizures crossed Rs 200 crore, including 163 crore by police.

A total of 585 companies of para-military forces were deployed to conduct the elections, besides 60 companies of state armed forces and 26,000 Home Guard and police personnel with specialised forces like Cobra and Jaguar keeping a vigil.

No violence was reported, barring Maoists torching five trucks in Latehar district hours before the commencement of polls. *—PTI*

Favouritism claims: Officer replaced

Deoghar, 20 Nov

Jharkhand BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Wednesday said he had filed a complaint with the Election Commission against a presiding officer for allegedly "favouring a ruling party candidate" in Madhupur Assembly constituency. Dubey claimed that following his complaint, the officer was arrested.Deoghar administration said the officer was replaced. *—PTI*

Maoists torch five trucks in Latehar

Latehar, 20 Nov

Hours before the commencement of the final phase of the Jharkhand Assembly elections, five trucks were torched allegedly by Maoists in Latehar district. The incident occurred in Laat forest under the jurisdiction of Herhanj Police Station around 1.30 am, a senior officer said. The trucks were deployed in coal transportation at the Tubed coal project in Latehar. *—PTI*

Palakkad: Slight drop in turnout compared to 2021 Assembly polls

PALAKKAD, 20 NOV

The Palakkad Assembly constituency, which saw a high octane campaign that gave rise to scores of controversies, saw a voter turnout of 70.01 per cent till 6.49pm on Wednesday after voting in the bypoll concluded in over 86 per cent of the polling booths.

This was a decline from the 73.83 per cent turnout recorded in the assembly polls held in the state in 2021.

When polling started at 7 am, it proceeded slowly with a low turnout of only 1.11 per cent at 8 am, according to figures released by the Election Commission (EC).

By noon, five hours after voting commenced, the turnout reached 30.48 per cent. It took another three hours after that for the turnout to cross the 50 per cent mark. Some voters, especially women, said that they waited till afternoon to go and vote in the hopes of avoiding the initial rush and long queues. "But there are long queues now," a female voter told a TV channel. *—PTI*

WB BJP Chief held on way to violence-hit Beldanga

KOLKATA, 20 NOV

The West Bengal Police on Wednesday afternoon made "preventive arrest" of BJP's state president and Union minister Sukanta Majumdar in Krishnanagar area in Nadia district when he was on his way to violence-hit Beldanga in adjoining Murshidabad to take stock of the situation there, a senior officer said.

He was was later released on bail. "Majumdar's preventive arrest was made in Krishnanagar area in Nadia district under Section 170 of BNSS. He was heading towards a place where prohibitory orders were in place," the senior officer of Krishnanagar police district told PTI.

"I was trying to go to Beldanga to review the situation there. Our party workers have put up road blockades in other areas in protest against the police preventing us from going to Beldanga," Majumdar said, soon after his arrest by Kotwali police station.

Following Majumdar's arrest, BJP party activists staged protests in different parts of the state.

Earlier in the day, Majumdar's convoy was stopped by the police while he was on his way to Beldanga, where around 17 people have been injured in clashes between two communities.

Police cited the imposition of prohibitory orders in the area and that the BJP leader's visit might have disrupted peace.

Clashes erupted between two communities in Beldanga on Saturday night over an objectionable message on a display board at a temporary gate erected for Kartik Puja. *—PTI*

Sukanta Majumdar along with his convoy was stopped by police at the Jalangi Bridge in WB ***PHOTO: ANI***

57 leprosy patients vote for 1st time in Jamtara

JAMTARA, 20 NOV

The distant dream of exercising their franchise turned into a reality for 57 leprosy patients on Wednesday, as they cast votes at a dedicated booth in the second and final phase of the Jharkhand assembly elections.

In a heartwarming moment, they queued up to participate in the democratic exercise at the special booth in the Snehpur Community Building in Mihijam, the booth was decorated with vibrant confetti and had arrangements of refreshments for them. All of them were filled with hope that the new government would work for their welfare.

Tinku Pandit, 36, a leprosy patient exercised his right to vote for the first time, hoping for an improvement in lives of the downtrodden section in the society.

He said they demand that the government give them a concrete house with facilities like drinking water and electricity. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

D Krishnakumar appointed as CJ of Manipur High Court

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Justice D Krishnakumar was appointed the Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court on Wednesday within 48 hours of the Supreme Court Collegium making the recommendation. The incumbent chief justice of the high court, Justice Siddharth Mridul, demits office on Thursday upon attaining the age of 62. The top court collegium on 18 November proposed the name of Justice Krishnakumar, presently serving as a judge of the Madras High Court, as the chief justice of the Manipur High Court. Union Law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal announced the elevation of Justice Krishnakumar as the Manipur High Court's chief justice on X and said, "I convey my best wishes to him." *—PTI*

6th edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Dec 2025

T'PURAM, 20 NOV

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said the 6th edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, the country's largest contemporary art exhibition, will be held from 12 December, 2025 to 31 March, 2026. The CM also revealed that noted Indian contemporary artist Nikhil Chopra will curate the nearly four-month-long event, which was last held in 2022-2023. Highlighting Chopra's accomplishments, Vijayan described him as a distinguished artist whose body of work spans drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptures, and installations. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, addressing the event virtually from Delhi, lauded the Biennale's transformative impact on Kerala and India's art scene since its inception in December 2012. *—PTI*

TN hooch tragedy: HC transfers probe to CBI

CHENNAI, 20 NOV

Madras High Court on Wednesday transferred to CBI, the investigation into the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, in which 67 people died after consuming illicit liquor. A division bench comprising Justices D Krishnakumar and PB Balaji passed the order on the petition filed by AIADMK Legal Wing Secretary IS Inbadurai, K Balu, President Advocates Forum for Social Justice and another advocate, which sought a CBI probe into the hooch tragedy. The bench directed the CBI to investigate all the three cases registered in this regard. The bench directed the CB-CID, Villupuram to hand over all the files relating to the cases to the CBI within 2 weeks. The state police shall extend their cooperation to the central agency, the bench added. *—PTI*

19 kg gold worth Rs 13 cr stolen from Telangana bank

HYDERABAD, 20 NOV

Over 19 kg of gold ornaments worth Rs 13.6 crore were stolen from a public sector bank in Warangal district of Telangana, police said on Wednesday. The burglars broke into the bank's branch at Rayaparthy mandal by cutting open the window with gas cutters and decamped with gold jewellery weighing about 19.5 kg from the main chest, they said. The bank staff noticed the heist on Tuesday and lodged a complaint with the police, following which a case was registered. The CCTV camera was found damaged and the burglars had taken away the digital video recorder (DVR) from the bank, the police said. Four teams have been formed to nab the burglars. Further investigation is on. *—PTI*

Killers of 6 will be brought to justice soon: Manipur CM

CM says no place for such barbaric acts in civilised society

IMPHAL, 20 NOV

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh expressed grief over the killing of six people by suspected Kuki militants last week and asserted that his government would not rest until the culprits are brought to justice.

He said search operations were underway for the killers of three women and three children whose bodies were recovered from a river in Jiribam district last week.

The chief minister also said the killing of women and children is a crime against humanity.

Singh, in a video message shared on X on Tuesday night, said, "Today, I stand here with profound sadness and anger to condemn the horrific killings of three innocent children and three innocent women by Kuki terrorists after being taken hostage at Jiribam."

The CM also said, "Such barbaric acts have no place in any civilised society. Let me assure you that the hunt for these terrorists is currently underway and they will be brought to justice very soon. We will not rest until they are held accountable for their inhuman actions."

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh PHOTO: PTI

The six people had been missing since 11 November from a camp for the displaced in Jiribam, following a gunfight between militants and security forces that led to the deaths of 10 insurgents.

Singh thanked the CRPF for their swift action in Jiribam and asserted that their commitment to duty saved the lives of hundreds of those living in relief camps at Borobekra in Jiribam. *—PTI*

SC grants 8 weeks to Manipur to respond to ILP plea

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Supreme Court on Wednesday granted eight weeks to the Manipur government to respond to a plea challenging the system of Inner Line Permit (ILP) in the state.

Manipur is the fourth state after Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram where the ILP regime is applicable. To visit ILP-regime states, outsiders, including people from other states of the country, need permission.

A bench of justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti gave time to Manipur after the counsel for the state government sought time.

The top court on 3 January, 2022 had issued notices to the Centre and the Manipur government. —PTI

AFTER SEASON'S COLDEST NIGHT

Dystopian Delhi wakes up to toxic air again

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Delhi witnessed yet another dawn with a blanket of toxic air on Wednesday, as the capital recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 426 in the "severe" category, which followed the coldest night of the season in the city so far.

The city's minimum temperature dropped to 11.1 degrees Celsius Tuesday night, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The drop in temperature combined with dense fog has blanketed the city, reducing visibility to 500 metres as of 8.30 am. The IMD has forecast dense fog to persist throughout the day.

Humidity levels stood at 84 per cent in the morning. The maximum temperature for the day is expected to settle at 25 degrees Celsius.

Delhi had an AQI reading of 426 at 9 am on Wednesday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Meanwhile, half of the staff in Delhi government offices will work from home while private organisations have been urged to follow suit amid alarmingly high air pollution in the national capital.

PHOTO: PTI

Nearly 80 departments and different agencies in the Delhi government, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, employ approximately 1.4 lakh people. *—PTI*

Victim Ramani refused marriage proposal of accused Madhan PHOTO: X

TN teacher stabbed to death, assailant held

THANJAVUR, 20 NOV

In a shocking incident, a woman teacher was fatally stabbed on government school premises in Mallipattinam in the district by a youth, leading to some tense moments in the educational institution, police said on Wednesday.

The youth, who was later detained, repeatedly stabbed the teacher in full view of her colleagues at the school's staff room, they said.

The incident evoked the spontaneous ire of the locals and Tamil Nadu School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi strongly condemned the attack on the teacher Ramani, of Mallipattanam Government Higher Secondary School, Thanjavur district.

"Violence against teachers cannot be tolerated. Strict legal action will be taken against the attacker. We express our deepest condolences to the bereaved family, students and fellow teachers of teacher Ramani," the Minister said on the social media platform X, shortly after the incident occurred.

The police claimed personal reason to be the motive behind the murderous attack.

The teacher was rushed to the government hospital here, but was declared brought dead by the doctors.

Describing her death as a "huge loss" for the teaching community, Poyyamozhi told reporters in Chennai that the man responsible for her murder has been arrested.

Chief Minister MK Stalin has asked him to visit Thanjavur and console the bereaved family, the Minister said. *—PTI*

Minor raped at brick kiln in Odisha

CUTTACK, 20 NOV

An eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped in a temporary shelter at a brick kiln in Odisha's Cuttack district, police said.

The minor has been admitted to the ICU of SCB Medical College & Hospital in Cuttack and her condition is critical, they said.

The incident took place at Trisulia area in the district on Tuesday night.

The parents of the girl, who are workers at the brick kiln, in their complaint lodged at Barang police station, stated that the accused is a 16-year-old boy hailing from Jharkhand.

"The accused is also employed at the kiln and he was arrested following a series of raids in the area," Cuttack DCP Jagmohan Meena said.

"We had formed three police teams as the accused and the girl's family belong to Jharkhand. One team was sent to Jharkhand, another to other districts in Odisha and a third team carried out searches in nearby areas," Meena said.

Investigation is underway, he said.

Earlier this month, six people, including a minor, were arrested for the alleged rape of a 19-year-old college student in Cuttack. *—PTI*

4 held for gangraping law student in Andhra

VISAKHAPATNAM, 20 NOV

Four men were arrested for allegedly gangraping a law student and blackmailing her with some intimate videos, police said.

The accused were arrested for allegedly raping the law student and also recording the act to blackmail her later, police said in a press release on Tuesday.

"All four accused (were) arrested and remanded. The victim's boyfriend (Vamsi) and his three close friends are the accused," Visakhapatnam police commissioner Shanka Brata Bagchi said.

According to police, the prime accused, Vamsi and the law student were in a relationship for more than a year and on 13 August, 2024 he took the girl to his friend's room in Krishna Nagar in the port city, where she was sexually assaulted.

With the help of the girl's boyfriend, the accused persons threatened the law student with her obscene videos and allegedly sexually assaulted her.

After months of harassment, the girl attempted suicide on 18 November, but was rescued by her father. She then shared her ordeal with the family. *—PTI*

MAN HELD FOR SEXUALLY HARASSING CO-PASSENGER ON GOA FLIGHT

PANAJI, 20 NOV

Police have arrested a 23-year-old man on charges of sexually harassing a woman co-passenger on a flight from Delhi to Goa, officials said on Wednesday. The alleged incident took place between 11am and 1.20pm on Tuesday on board the Air India flight, as per the FIR. The 28-year-old woman, resident of Janakpuri in New Delhi, told the police that when the plane was airborne, the man, who was sitting on the seat next to her, pulled over a blanket and allegedly started indulging in objectionable acts. The man purposely kept the blanket open at the side of the victim during the act, as per the FIR. The Dabolim airport police later arrested the man, identified as Jitender Jangian, hailing from Panipat in Haryana, a senior official said. *—PTI*

Food at Himachal temple, stalls found unfit for consumption

HAMIRPUR/UNA, 20 NOV

After samples of 'rotes' sold at Hamirpur's temple trust shop failed, samples of 'golgappa' water and coffee have been found to be substandard while those of mustard oil have failed the test in Himachal Pradesh's Una district.

A total of 17 samples collected randomly from food shops and costermongers ('rehris') in Una town were sent for testing recently to the composite testing laboratory at Kandaghat in Solan district. Presence of colour was found in golgappa. According to the rules, colour cannot be used in water, officials said.

On Tuesday, samples of 'rotes' as 'prasad being sold at the Baba Balak Nath temple in Deothsidh in Hamirpur district were found unfit for consumption.

The shop was closed on Wednesday by the temple management which maintained that the shop would be outsourced shortly.

Meanwhile, report of three of the 17 samples has come from the Kandaghat laboratory. Out of these, two are substandard and one is "mis-branded".

Questions are being raised on the quality of spiced water served with golgappa, which is a popular snack nationwide, among the people especially the young generation. Samples of golgappa water collected in Una by the Food Standard and Safety Wing were found to be substandard.

The samples of mustard oil was found to be "mis-branded", which implies it was adulterated while the sample of ready-to-serve coffee was found to be substandard, the officials said, adding that further action will be taken in this matter, the officials maintained. *—PTI*

CHIDAMBARAM'S TRIAL STAYED BY HC IN PMLA CASE

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Delhi High Court on Wednesday stayed the trial court proceedings against senior Congress leader P Chidambaram in the Aircel-Maxis case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate.

The High Court also issued notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and sought its response on Chidambaram's petition challenging the trial court's order taking cognisance of the chargesheet filed by the agency against him and his son Karti in the money laundering case. *—PTI*

Evidence tampering case: Antony to face trial

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Supreme Court on Wednesday restored criminal proceedings in a trial court against former Kerala transport minister Antony Raju for alleged tampering of evidence in a drug seizure case reported in 1990.

A bench of Justices CT Ravikumar and Sanjay Karol held that it can't be said that the high court order allowing fresh proceedings against Raju was bad in law. Court asked the trial court to conclude proceedings within a year.

"The accused shall appear before the trial court on 20 December, 2024 or on next working day of court concerned," Kerala High Court on 10 March last year had quashed the proceedings noting some technical grounds in the case.

PHOTO: PTI

The case against the minister, a leader of Janadhipathya Kerala Congress, which is an ally of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF), was related to an alleged tampering of evidence in a drug seizure case reported in 1990. *—PTI*

350M kids in India by 2050, action needed: UNICEF

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

A India, projected to house 350 million children by 2050, must navigate critical challenges like extreme climate and environmental hazards to ensure their well-being and rights, according to a new UNICEF report.

It underlined that although India will see a decline of 106 million children compared to today, it will still account for 15 per cent of the global child population, sharing this responsibility with China, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

UNICEF's flagship State of the World's Children 2024 report, The Future of Children in a Changing World, was launched in New Delhi on Wednesday, spotlighting three global megatrends, demographic shifts, climate crises, and frontier technologies that are set to reshape the lives of children by 2050.

The report underscored that India, projected to house 350 million children by 2050, must navigate critical challenges to ensure their well-being and rights.

Although India will see a decline of 106 million children compared to today, it will still account for 15 per cent of the global child population, sharing this responsibility with China, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

The report outlines the need for India to prioritise investments in health, education, skilling, and sustainable urban infrastructure.

Nearly half of India's population is projected to live in urban areas by 2050. *—PTI*

IN GUYANA

Modi handed over 'Key to City of Georgetown'

GEORGETOWN, 20 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who arrived in Guyana on Wednesday – the first visit by an Indian head of the state in more than 50 years — said his visit "will deepen the friendship between our nations."

Modi was received at the airport by Guyana President Irfan Ali, Prime Minister Mark Anthony Phillips and more than a dozen cabinet ministers. At the hotel, they were joined by Grenada Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell and Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley.

In an unprecedented gesture, Modi was handed over the 'Key to the City of Georgetown', which officials described as a testament of close India-Guyana ties.

PHOTO: PTI

The Ministry of External Affairs, in a post on X along with photos, described it as "A special welcome!" and said "this is the first visit by an Indian PM to Guyana in 56 years."

The prime minister is on the last leg of his three-nation visit after attending the G20 Summit in Brazil and visiting Nigeria. He will stay in Guyana till Thursday.

"Gratitude to President Dr Irfan Ali, PM Mark Anthony Phillips, senior ministers and other dignitaries for coming to receive me at the airport. I am confident this visit will deepen the friendship between our nations," Modi posted on X.

Modi will also join leaders from the Caribbean partner countries for the second India-CARICOM Summit. According to the MEA, there are around 3,20,000 people of Indian origin in Guyana. *—PTI*

YAMUNA RIVER SALVAGE

A ragpicker collects recyclable items from the garbage strewn along the banks of the polluted Yamuna river, in New Delhi, on Wednesday
PHOTO: PTI

Neighbours oppose our UNSC membership: India

India is "unsatisfied" with the pace of progress on Security Council reform, the country's envoy at the UN said, noting that there are countries who prefer the status quo and those that oppose expansion in the permanent category "at all costs" as they feel their neighbours may have a chance to become a member.

"The Security Council structure, as it stands today, is a reflection of 1945. It does not reflect today's realities," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said during a conversation here on Tuesday.

Harish delivered the keynote address on 'Responding to Key Global Challenges: The India Way' at an event at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

Harish gave an expansive overview of the "India way" on key global issues ranging from reformed multilateralism, terrorism, demography, India's digital revolution to the country's youth, climate change, democracy, healthcare and vaccines.

The event was co-sponsored by the MPA programme in Global Leadership and the International Organisation and UN Studies programme (IO/UNS) and attended by students, faculty and policy experts.

He noted that the United Nations does "great work" in the humanitarian field, addressing the humanitarian requirements of hundreds of millions around the world as well as in the development domain -- children's health, public health, and labour through its specialised institutions.

"Yet for the common man on the street, their perception, the lenses through which they view the UN is neither the humanitarian dimension nor the development dimension or the public health dimension. They only look at the inability of the UN to stop conflicts in areas like Ukraine and the Middle East. That is the view they have and that is probably the only yardstick by which they are assessing the efficiency of the UN," he said during a panel discussion after the keynote address.

Parvathaneni Harish, India's permanent representative to the UN Ambassador
PHOTO: X

Harish underlined that there is consensus that the UN Security Council should be reformed.

"This is the way nations behave, very much like people, in terms of motivations."

Pakistan is part of the group 'Uniting for Consensus' that opposes permanent seats for India and other G4 nations Brazil, Germany and Japan.

Of the five Permanent members of the Council, France, Russia, the UK and the US have voiced strong support for India's bid for a permanent seat in a reformed Council.

China has said that Security Council reform is an important part of the reform of the multilateral governance architecture but also pointed to the "practice of a few countries and interest groups who pursue their own selfish and small-circle interests when it comes to Council reform".

Harish described the process as being "very difficult" and "complex".

"Yes, we are unsatisfied with the pace of progress in the last 15-16 years and urging the co-chairs of the Inter-Governmental Negotiation process to decisively move forward on this.

"Is it going to be easy and will it happen tomorrow? Probably not. What should we do? We should keep at it because eventually, things will not remain the same. Nothing remains the same. Change is a natural order of things. It will happen, if not today, tomorrow. If not tomorrow, the day after. We are engaged with this process because we need a multilateral system that works, and is fit for purpose to deal with today's challenges, problems and also opportunities."

Harish emphasised the institutions of multilateralism that "we have today are a product of the post Second World War.

"The reality of 1945 is long gone, the institutions remain. They are not fit for purpose for dealing with today's challenges and opportunities. Yet they have not been reformed, whether it is the UN, the UN Security Council, international financial institutions, trade bodies, each one of them needs to be made fit for purpose for today's realities," he said.

Harish said that changing the status quo is not easy. "You have a lot of status quo supporters, and you need to build consensus for this. It's a difficult process which is still ongoing," he said.

"We are a multipolar world, and we in Asia are clear that a multipolar Asia in a multipolar world is the way ahead," he said.

Summarising the "India way", Harish underlined that the "world is not a zero-sum game". The 'India way' that has emerged is a "proactive India playing on the front foot", he said using cricket terminology, of "Go ahead and engage, manage difficult partners, cultivate new friends that you have not dealt with before, reassure old friends with whom you have had many years of productive partnership, draw in new stakeholders to all the things that you want to bring about, reach out both to old friends and new partners as you come up with new approaches of dealing with things, extend a hand of friendship and collaboration to all, and finally, expand the outreach, the footprint, and hands of friendship to everybody.

"No to dogma. Don't get caught out just because you did something in a particular way" over the last several decades. "Consistency is not a virtue. Yes, to calculated risk-taking, because increasingly, we are dealing with a young population, that wants prosperity as of yesterday, that has great aspirations, that wants innovation and wants transformation. If we don't change the way we do business, we will not be in a position to meet their aspirations," he said outlining the 'India Way'.

"India is a bridge between the developed and the developing world, between the established and the emerging, a friend of the world that believes in participatory institution building without confrontation. We don't want to impose anything on anyone. Global commons for global good. This is what we work for." *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

What Trump's call to scrap education dept entails

Throughout his campaign, President-elect Donald Trump heaped scorn on the federal Department of Education, describing it as being infiltrated by "radicals, zealots and Marxists".

He has picked Linda McMahon, a former wrestling executive, to lead the department. But like many conservative politicians before him, Trump has called for dismantling the department altogether — a cumbersome task that likely would require action from Congress.

The agency's main role is financial. Annually, it distributes billions in federal money to colleges and schools and manages the federal student loan portfolio. Closing the department would mean redistributing each of those duties to another agency.

The Education Department also plays an important regulatory role in services for students, ranging from those with disabilities to low-income and homeless kids.

Indeed, federal education money is central to Trump's plans for colleges and schools. Trump has vowed to cut off federal money for schools and colleges that push "critical race theory, transgender insanity, and other inappropriate racial, sexual or political content" and to reward states and schools that end teacher tenure and enact universal school choice programmes.

Student loans and financial aid

The Education Department manages approximately USD 1.5 trillion in student loan debt for over 40 million borrowers. It also oversees the Pell Grant, which provides aid to students below a certain income threshold, and administers the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which universities use to allocate financial aid.

The Biden administration has made cancellation of student loans a signature effort of the department's work. Since Biden's initial attempt to cancel student loans was overturned by the Supreme Court, the administration has forgiven over USD 175 billion for more than 4.8 million borrowers through a range of changes to programmes it administers, such as Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

The loan forgiveness efforts have faced Republican pushback, including litigation from several GOP-led states.

Civil rights enforcement

Through its Office for Civil Rights, the Education Department conducts investigations and issues guidance on how civil rights laws should be applied, such as for LGBTQ+ students and students of colour.

The office also oversees a large data collection project that tracks disparities in resources, course access and discipline for students of different racial and socioeconomic groups.

Trump has suggested a different interpretation of the office's civil rights role. In his campaign platform, he said he would pursue civil rights cases to "stop schools from discriminating on the basis of race".

While the Education Department does not directly accredit colleges and universities, it oversees the system by reviewing all federally recognised accrediting agencies.

Institutions of higher education must be accredited to gain access to federal money for student financial aid.

Accreditation came under scrutiny from conservatives in 2022, when the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools questioned political interference at Florida public colleges and universities. Trump has said he would fire "radical left accreditors" and take applications for new accreditors that would uphold standards including "defending the American tradition" and removing "Marxist" diversity administrators.

Although the education secretary has the authority to terminate its relationship with individual accrediting agencies, it is an arduous process that has rarely been pursued. Under President Barack Obama, the department took steps to cancel accreditors for a now-defunct for-profit college chain, but the Trump administration blocked the move.

Money for schools

Much of the Education Department's money for K-12 schools goes through large federal programs, such as Title I for low-income schools and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Those programmes support services for students with disabilities, lower class sizes with additional teaching positions, and pay for social workers and other non-teaching roles in schools.

During his campaign, Trump called for shifting those functions to the states. He has not offered details on how the agency's core functions of sending federal money to local districts } and schools would be handled. *—PTI*

US Prez-elect Donald Trump has vowed to cut off federal money for schools and colleges that push critical race theory, transgender insanity, and other racial, sexual or political content ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

US shifts stance on Ukraine striking Russia: What does it mean?

The lifting of US restrictions on the use of ATACMS ballistic missiles by Ukraine may help it repel Russian forces trying to retake Russian territory seized by Ukraine earlier this year. It could also strengthen Ukraine's hand ahead of US President-elect Donald Trump's arrival in the White House in January.

It may, however, be another case of too little, too late in Western support for Ukraine.

This week, the Biden Administration lifted restrictions on Ukraine's use of US-supplied missiles known as ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile Systems). ATACMS have a range of around 300 kilometres. Previously, the US has told Ukraine only to use them against Russian forces on Ukrainian territory.

This has been a source of huge frustration to Ukraine, particularly as it could not use them against bases inside Russia that have launched ceaseless missile and drone assaults on Ukrainian cities.

Russian attacks on Ukraine in October killed 183 civilians and wounded another 903, according to the UN.

Precise details of the change in US policy have not been announced publicly. The New York Times reports that permission to hit Russian territory will only apply initially to attacking Russian forces massing in the Kursk region.

North Korea's involvement may be the main reason prompting the removal of limits on the ATACMS. Apart from strengthening Ukraine's chances of keeping its foothold inside Russian territory, the move may also discourage North Korea from sending more troops.

The North Korean presence also provides some justification for the US decision, allaying concerns it could be framed by Russia as an escalation.

Careful decision-making by the West

Fears of escalation and the possibility of direct conflict between Russia and NATO have been a major reason for the US caution thus far.

This has been fuelled in part by Russian nuclear sabre-rattling. Russian President Vladimir Putin upped the ante in September, warning that allowing Western weapons to hit Russia would constitute NATO's "direct participation" in the war.

Russia claims, apparently without foundation, that such weapons need Western crews to man them. Russia also claims the missiles may require Western intelligence to ensure accurate targeting.

The Kremlin has reacted predictably to the US announcement this week, saying it would add "fuel to the fire" of the war.

The lifting of US restrictions on the use of ATACMS ballistic missiles by Ukraine may help it repel Russian forces trying to retake Russian territory seized by Ukraine earlier this year ***PHOTO: PTI***

However, ATACMS have already been used against Russian targets inside Ukrainian sovereign territory, notably in Crimea, which Moscow illegally annexed a decade ago.

Some Biden administration sources have told the media that fears of retaliation via sabotage also have shaped its wariness about allowing ATACMS to hit Russia. Russian intelligence services have mounted a substantial sabotage campaign in Europe during the past year.

Aversion to such risk has been evident from the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Western countries have shown concern at every step about crossing Putin's supposed "red lines".

They initially baulked at supplying different types of equipment – be it tanks, fighter jets, short-range missiles or long-range missiles. They then put restrictions on where and how they could be used.

Will it help Ukraine?

The US restrictions on using ATACMS led Britain and France to place similar limits on Ukraine's use of Storm Shadow and SCALP missiles, which have a range of 250 kilometres. It seems likely the US move will now enable the UK and France to follow suit in relaxing those limits.

Another boost to Ukraine's arsenal could come from Germany, where the Greens, Social Democrats and the opposition Christian Democrats support green-lighting delivery of Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine, which have a range of 500 kilometres.

Russia's support has grown

Allowing a sovereign state that's been illegally invaded to use weapons against military targets inside the aggressor country is hardly escalatory.

Moreover, as US-based Russian scholar Sergei Radchenko points out, it would be extremely risky for Russia, which has so woefully underperformed on the battlefield in Ukraine, to attack NATO in response.

Russian warnings about escalation seem even more preposterous given the huge amount of weaponry and ammunition Russia has received from its own supporters, even before the entry of North Korean soldiers.

North Korea has sold Russia hundreds of ballistic missiles and millions of rounds of ammunition. And it is now reportedly supplying Russia with self-propelled howitzers and multiple rocket launchers.

And China sells Russia around US$300 million (AUSD 460 million) each month in dual-use equipment necessary for weapons production, from machine tools to microchips. Russia may even have set up a military drone factory in China.

What could Trump's arrival mean?

The Biden White House may further reduce restrictions on using ATACMS inside Russia, for example, allow their use beyond the Kursk region, in an effort to leave Ukraine in as strong a position as possible before Trump takes office.

Some Ukrainians fear Trump may cut support for Ukraine in his effort to end the war quickly. However, others believe Trump may be just as helpful as the Biden administration, given the latter's caution, and the need for Trump to be seen as a credible dealmaker, rather than selling Ukraine down the river.

Some in Trump's new team, notably incoming National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, have spoken, albeit equivocally, of using the prospect of more robust support for Ukraine as leverage in pushing Putin to negotiate.

But optimism on this score must be offset by the strong presence in his new Cabinet and inner circle of those who have been strong critics of aid to Ukraine or even downright apologists for Russia.

There is also a strong chance the Trump administration could rescind the decision to lift the restrictions on ATACMS use. *—PTI*

After 9 years, 1D reunites for Liam Payne's funeral

LONDON, 20 NOV

One Direction bandmates- Harry Styles, Niall Horan, Louis Tomlinson and Zayn Malik reunited after 9 years to attend the late singer Liam Payn'es funeral on Wednesday. The British singer died on October 16 after falling from the third floor of a hotel in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The private service at a church in Amersham, England. Simon Cowell, James Corden and the model Damian Hurley also attended, photos showed, as well as several members of the girl group Girls Aloud, including Cheryl, Kimberley Walsh and Nicola Roberts. Cheryl is the mother of Payne's 7-year-old son, Bear. Payne's girlfriend, Kate Cassidy, was also at the service. —Agencies

Iraq holds national census after decades

BAGHDAD, 20 NOV

Iraq began its first nationwide population census in decades on Wednesday, a step aimed at modernising data collection and planning in a country long impacted by conflict and political divisions. The last nationwide census in Iraq was held in 1987. Another one held in 1997 excluded the Kurdish region. The act of counting the population is also contentious. The census is expected to have profound implications for Iraq's resource distribution, budget allocations and development planning. Minority groups fear that a documented decline in their numbers will bring decreased political influence and fewer economic benefits in the country's sectarian power-sharing system. The new census "charts a developmental map for the future and sends a message of stability", said Planning Minister Mohammed Tamim. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Ugandan Oppn leader in military court, says his wife

NAIROBI, 20 NOV

Winnie Byanyima, the executive director of UNAIDS, and wife of Ugandan Opposition figure Kizza Besigye, on Wednesday said he was kidnapped in neighbouring Kenya and was being held in a Ugandan military jail. Besigye, a fierce critic of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, has on previous occasions been arrested and assaulted. The Ugandan government has not commented on the latest incident. Besigye was last seen on Saturday in Kenya, where he was attending a politician's book launch, Byanyima wrote on the social platform X. She said she was "reliably informed" that he was being held in a military jail. "We, his family and his lawyers, demand to see him. He is not a soldier. Why is he being held in a military jail?" she wrote. —*PTI*

UK inflation hits 6-month high in Oct

LONDON, 20 NOV

Inflation in the UK rose sharply to a six-month high in October and back above the rate targeted by rate-setters at the Bank of England, official figures showed on Wednesday, an increase that is set to cement the market expectations that there will be no further cuts in borrowing rates this year. The Office for National Statistics said higher domestic energy bills pushed up consumer price inflation up to 2.3 per cent in October from the three-year low of 1.7 per cent recorded the previous month. Stubbornly high inflation in the services sector, which accounts for around 80 per cent of the British economy, didn't help either. The increase took inflation above the bank's target rate of 2 per cent. —*PTI*

Biden gives Ukraine anti-personnel mines

The development comes after Ukraine fired US-supplied missiles into Russia for the 1st time

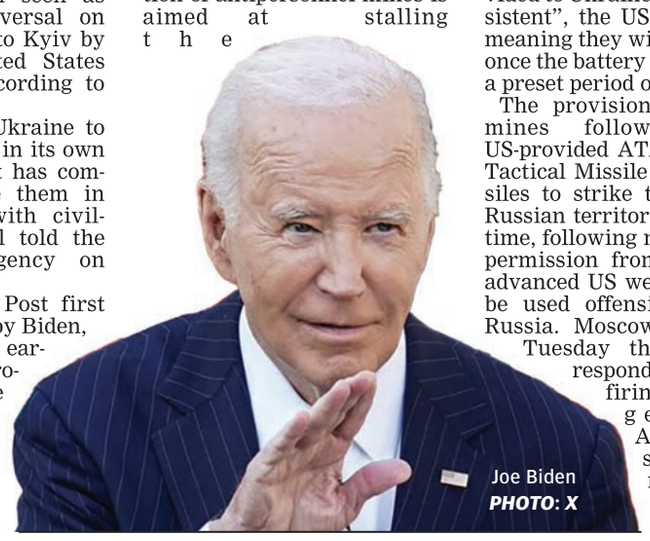
WASHINGTON DC, 20 NOV

US President Joe Biden has approved providing antipersonnel land mines to Ukraine, in what has been seen as another policy reversal on weapons provided to Kyiv by the outgoing United States administration, according to reports.

The US expects Ukraine to use the land mines in its own territory, though it has committed not to use them in areas populated with civilians, a US official told the Reuters news agency on Wednesday.

The Washington Post first reported the move by Biden, which reverses his earlier reluctance to provide land mines due to concerns over the risk they present to civilian populations, which anti-mine campaigners say is unacceptably high.

Ukraine has received US-made antitank mines throughout the war against Russian forces, but the addition of antipersonnel mines is aimed at stalling the expanding advance of Russian ground forces in recent months, a US official said on condition of anonymity.



Joe Biden
PHOTO: X

The US land mines to be provided to Ukraine are "non-persistent", the US official said, meaning they will not explode once the battery runs out after a preset period of time.

The provision of US land mines follows use of US-provided ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile System) missiles to strike targets inside Russian territory for the first time, following newly-granted permission from Biden that advanced US weaponry could be used offensively against Russia. Moscow warned on Tuesday that it would respond to Ukraine's firing of the longer-range ATACMS missiles, which reportedly hit targets in Russia's Bryansk region.

- US Embassy in Kyiv said it would stay closed after receiving a warning of a potentially significant Russian air attack on the Ukrainian capital. The move comes amid the ongoing Russian missile and drone attacks on Kyiv

Meanwhile, the US Embassy in Kyiv said it would stay closed on Wednesday after receiving a warning of a potentially significant Russian air attack on the Ukrainian capital. The US Embassy said its closure and attack warning were issued in the context of ongoing Russian missile and drone attacks on Kyiv and anticipated a quick return to regular operations. —*PTI*

N Korea sent weapons to Russia, says S Korea

SEOUL, 20 NOV

North Korea recently supplied additional artillery systems to Russia to support its war efforts against Ukraine, while some of the thousands of North Korean troops deployed in Russia have begun engaging in combat, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Wednesday.

In a closed-door briefing at parliament, the National Intelligence Service (NIS) said North Korea exported 170mm self-propelled guns and 240mm multiple rocket launch systems to Russia, according to lawmaker Lee Seong Kweun, who attended the meeting.

Kweun said the NIS assessed that the Russian military were unfamiliar with those weapons, so North Korea might have dispatched personnel to teach the Russians how to use them and handle their maintenance.

The Financial Times, citing Ukrainian intelligence assessments, reported on Sunday that North Korea in recent weeks sent some 50 domestically produced 170mm self-propelled howitzers and 20 240mm multiple launch rocket systems to Russia. ——*PTI*

NETANYAHU IN GAZA

Israel offers $5M for each Gaza captive

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the Netzarim Corridor in the central Gaza Strip on Wednesday
PHOTO: X/ @NETANYAHU

JERUSALEM, 20 NOV

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said USD5 million will be given as a reward for each captive released from Gaza and those that help free Israelis held by Hamas will be given a way out of the war-torn Palestinian territory.

Netanyahu announced the reward offer during a brief visit to Gaza on Tuesday where he was shown the Israeli military's Netzarim Corridor – a key access road and buffer zone constructed by Israel's army to dissect northern Gaza from the southern part.

"To those who want to leave this entanglement, I say, whoever brings us a hostage, will find a safe way out for himself and his family. We will also give $5m for every hostage," Netanyahu said during his brief visit to the Palestinian territory. "The choice is yours but the result will be the same – we will bring them all back," he said.

Israel estimates that 101 captives remain in Gaza, though around one-third of that number are now believed to have died.Netanyahu's reward offer comes as mass protests continue in Israel by families of captives and their supporters, demanding a ceasefire deal with Hamas.

The PM has repeatedly said that a military option is the only way to free all the captives.

The families have accused the Netanyahu government of not doing enough to reach a ceasefire deal while a former aide to Netanyahu has been arrested on suspicion of leaking classified materials to foreign media in an apparent bid to scuttle an earlier truce deal with Hamas. —*PTI*

3 Lebanese soldiers killed in Israeli attack on army base

SARAFAND, 20 NOV

Three Lebanese soldiers have been killed in an Israeli air strike on an army base in southern Lebanon's town of Sarafand, while at least 17 civilians living nearby the facility were injured. "The Israeli enemy targeted an army centre in the town of Sarafand in the south, which led to the martyrdom of three soldiers," the Lebanese military said in a post on social media late on Tuesday. ebanon's Health Ministry said that 17 people were injured in the strike after reporting earlier that Israeli attacks across the country over the previous 24 hours killed 28 people and wounded 107. —*PTI*

Hacker steals file accusing Gaetz in sex scandal

WASHINGTON DC, 20 NOV

An unauthorised person gained access to a file containing confidential testimony from women who have made allegations about former Rep. Matt Gaetz, Donald Trump's pick to become the next attorney general, a lawyer said on Wednesday.

Attorneys involved in a civil case brought by a Gaetz associate were notified this week that an unauthorised person accessed a file shared between lawyers that included unredacted depositions from a woman who has said Gaetz had sex with her when she was 17, and a second woman who says she saw the encounter, according to attorney Joel Leppard.

Leppard said this week that two women he represents told House Ethics Committee investigators that Gaetz paid them for sex on multiple occasions beginning in 2017, when Gaetz was in Congress.

One of the women testified she saw him having sex with a 17-year-old at a party in Florida in 2017, according to Leppard. Leppard has said that his client testified she didn't think Gaetz knew the girl was underage, stopped their relationship when he found out and did not resume it until after she turned 18. Trump, who has railed against the Justice Department over the two criminal cases brought against him, has described Gaetz as the right person to "root out the systemic corruption" —*PTI*

SpaceX CEO Elon Musk with US president-elect Donald Trump during the launch of the sixth test flight of SpaceX rocket, in Texas
PHOTO: X

Matt Gaetz
PHOTO: X

McMahon mooted as Education Secy

WASHINGTON DC, 20 NOV

President-elect Donald Trump will nominate his transition co-chair Linda McMahon for Education secretary, revealed two people familiar with the transition discussions.

McMahon, 76, gained prominence as a powerful force in making WWE a multibillion-dollar enterprise before she led the Small Business Administration during Trump's first term.

She has minimal education experience but is the board chair of the America First Policy Institute, a conservative think tank stocked with other Trump insiders, and she'd likely sail through her Senate confirmation. —*PTI*

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS 12 SOLDIERS IN PAKISTAN

PESHAWAR, 20 NOV

Twelve security personnel and six terrorists were killed as a suicide bomber rammed an explosive laden vehicle into a joint check post in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said on Wednesday.

The terrorists attempted to attack a joint check post in general area MaliKhel in Bannu district late on Tuesday night but their attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted by troops, the Inter-Services Public Relations, the Army's media wing, said. The blast led to collapse of portion of perimeter wall and damaged the adjoining infrastructure, resulting in the death of "12 brave sons of soil" including 10 soldiers of the security forces and two soldiers of the Frontier Constabulary, the ISPR said. In the ensuing fire exchange, six terrorists were also killed. The injured have been shifted to a local hospital. A curfew has been imposed in the area. —*PTI*

SE Asian defence chiefs meet amid maritime row with China

VIENTIANE, 20 NOV

Southeast Asian defence chiefs and representatives met in Laos on Wednesday for security talks at a time of increasing maritime disputes with China in the Asia-Pacific and as the transition to a new US president looms.

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin was set to join the meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) defence ministers in Vientiane, where many will be looking for assurances before President-elect Donald Trump's return to power in January.

Austin just wrapped up meetings in Australia with officials there and Japan's defence minister, where they pledged their support for ASEAN and their "serious concern about destabilising actions in the East and South China Seas, including dangerous conduct by the People's Republic of China against Philippines and other coastal state vessels". In addition to the US, other nations attending the two-day ASEAN meetings include Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and China. Along with the Philippines, ASEAN member states Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have competing claims with China in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost entirely as its own territory. Opening the talks, Laotian Defense Minister Chansamone Chanyalath said he hoped for productive meetings that would "become a standard for us to continue ASEAN's cooperation in defence, including how to handle, thwart and manage security threats in the present and in the future". ASEAN members and Beijing have been trying to chalk out a code of conduct to govern behaviour in the sea by 2026, but progress has been slow. —*PTI*

South East Asian defence chiefs pose for a group photo during the ASEAN meeting in Vientiane, Laos, on Wednesday
PHOTO: PTI

6,00,000 WITHOUT POWER

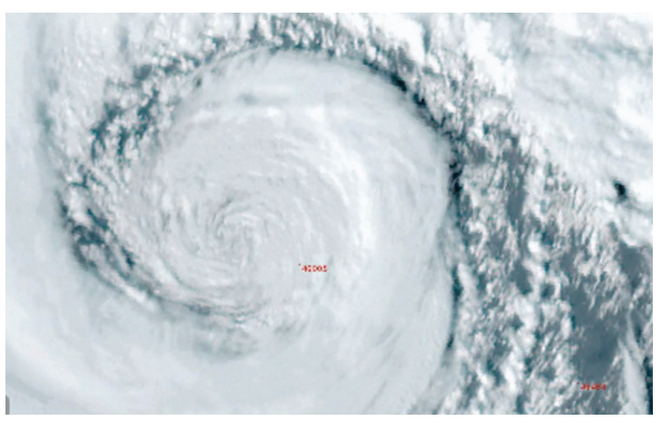
'Bomb cyclone' triggers major blackout in US

SEATTLE, 20 NOV

A major storm swept across the northwest US on Tuesday evening, battering the region with strong winds and rain, causing widespread power outages and downing trees that killed at least one person.

The Weather Prediction Centre issued excessive rainfall risks through Friday and hurricane-force wind warnings were in effect as the strongest atmospheric river – a large plume of moisture – that California and the Pacific Northwest has seen this season overwhelmed the region. The storm system is considered a " bomb cyclone", which occurs when a cyclone intensifies rapidly.

Downed trees struck homes and littered roads across northwest Washington. In Lynnwood, Washington, a woman died on Tuesday night when a large tree fell on a homeless encampment, South County Fire said in a statement on X.



Powerful storm also called a bomb cyclone rotates off the US West Coast
PHOTO: PTI

In Seattle, a tree fell on a vehicle, temporarily trapping a person inside, the Seattle Fire Department reported. The agency later said the individual was in stable condition.

"Trees are coming down all over the city and falling onto homes," the fire department in Bellevue, about 16km east of Seattle, posted on the social platform X. "If you can, go to the lowest floor and stay away from windows. Do not go outside if you can avoid it," it said.

Early Wednesday, over 600,000 houses in Washington State were reported to be without power. But the number of outage reports fluctuated wildly throughout the evening likely due in part to several weather and utility agencies struggling to report information on the storm because of internet outages and other technical problems. It wasn't clear if that figure was accurate. More than 15,000 had lost power in Oregon and nearly 19,000 in California. —*PTI*

Hong Kong tycoon Lai testifies in collusion trial

HONG KONG, 20 NOV

- He is accused of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to issue seditious publications. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison

Former Hong Kong publisher Jimmy Lai, in his landmark national security trial on Wednesday, denied that he had asked then US vice president Mike Pence and then secretary of state Mike Pompeo, at meetings with them during the territory's anti-government protests in 2019, to take action against the city and China.

Lai, founder of the now-shuttered Apple Daily pro-democracy newspaper, was arrested in 2020 in the crackdown that followed the protests. He is accused of colluding with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiring with others to issue seditious publications. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison.

He testified about his meetings with former US officials and gave details about his alleged overseas political connections with people in the US, Britain and Taiwan, including Taiwan ex-President Tsai Ing-wen and Hong Kong's last British governor Chris Patten. But the media tycoon, who also describes himself as a businessman and social activist, said he never tried to influence foreign policy on Hong Kong or China through the people he met overseas or ask them to take action against them. —*PTI*

Gold slips ₹150 to ₹77,900 per 10g; silver falls by ₹500

NEW TEHRI, 20 NOV

Gold prices slipped Rs 150 to Rs 77,900 per 10g in the national capital on Wednesday amid a weak trend in the international market, according to local marketmen. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 78,050 per 10g on Tuesday. Silver also declined Rs 500 to Rs 93,000 per kg on decreased offtake by coin makers and industrial units. It had settled at Rs 93,500 per kg in the previous session. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity fell Rs 150 to Rs 77,500 per 10g against the previous close of Rs 77,650 per 10g on Tuesday. On Wednesday, the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) was closed for trading in the morning session due to Assembly elections in Maharashtra. The exchange is carrying out trading in the evening session from 5-11.55 pm *—PTI*

Coal imports dip amid push for domestic supply

NEW DELHI 20 NOV

Coal imports by non-regulated sectors (NRS) in India fell by 9.83 per cent to 63.28 million tonnes (MT) during the April-September period of the current financial year, down from 70.18 MT in the same timeframe last year, the government announced on Wednesday. Similarly, imports by domestic thermal power plants for blending also decreased by 8.59 per cent to 9.79 MT, compared to 10.71 MT in the previous year. The Coal Ministry highlighted this trend as an indication of increasing reliance on domestic coal supplies. However, imports of coking coal, vital for the steel industry, and coal for imported coal-based power plants—essential operations that cannot use domestic alternatives—increased. The coal imports for the April-September 2024 period rose by 1.3 per cent to 129.52 MT. In terms of value, imported coal is valued at Rs 1,38,763.50 crore, a decrease from Rs 1,52,392.23 crore from last year. *—PTI*

CIEL HR services plans IPO to raise Rs 335 crore

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

CIEL HR Services Ltd, a provider of technology-driven human resources solutions, has submitted initial filings to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for an initial public offering (IPO). The proposed offering comprises a fresh equity issue of Rs. 335 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of 474,000 shares by existing shareholders. Currently, promoters hold a significant 87 per cent stake in the company. CIEL may also raise Rs 67 crore through a pre-IPO placement, potentially reducing the fresh issue size. Proceeds will support acquisitions, working capital needs, and investments in various subsidiaries to enhance their learning platforms. The Chennai-based company offers a wide range of HR services, from staffing to payroll and compliance.. *—PTI*

New regulations mandated for traffic equipments

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

The government is set to enforce new regulations mandating the verification and stamping of traffic radar equipment to bolster road safety and improve enforcement accuracy nationwide. The Legal Metrology Division of the Consumer Affairs Ministry has finalised the draft rules after extensive consultations with stakeholders, including the Indian Institute of Legal Metrology and vehicle certification organisations. These regulations, under the Legal Metrology (General) Rules 2011, will apply to microwave Doppler radar devices used for measuring vehicle speeds. All speed measurement tools must now undergo verification and receive official stamps before use, ensuring precise speed and distance readings essential for traffic law enforcement. The initiative aims to enhance road safety and curb dangerous driving behaviours. *—PTI*

GDP may slip to 6.5% due to corporate challenges: ICRA

RBI continues to project a growth rate of 7.2% for this year

MUMBAI, 20 NOV

Domestic rating agency Icra has predicted that India's real GDP growth for the September quarter is likely to drop to 6.5 per cent, attributing this decline to heavy rainfall and weaker corporate performance. Despite this forecast, Icra has maintained its full-year growth estimate for FY25 at 7 per cent, with hopes for a resurgence in economic activity during the latter half of the fiscal year.

This outlook emerges amid concerns regarding a slowdown in growth, particularly due to declining urban demand. While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continues to project a growth rate of 7.2 per cent for the fiscal year, many analysts are adjusting their forecasts downward.

The official data on economic activity for the second quarter is set to be released on November 30, following a GDP expansion of 6.7 per cent in the previous quarter. Icra noted several factors influencing the expected dip, including adverse weather conditions impacting mining and electricity demand, alongside a contraction in merchandise exports.

The official data on economic activity for the second quarter is set to be released on 30 November *PHOTO: PTI*

In a more optimistic note, the report highlighted positive trends in government spending and kharif sowing, with expectations of an improvement in the services sector.

- Domestic rating agency Icra has predicted that India's real GDP growth for the September quarter is likely to drop to 6.5 per cent, attributing this decline to heavy rainfall and weaker corporate performance. Despite this forecast, Icra has maintained its full-year growth estimate for FY25 at 7 per cent

Chief Economist Aditi Nayar remarked on the potential benefits of healthy monsoons, suggesting these could enhance rural sentiment. However, she emphasised the need to monitor the effects of slowing personal loan growth on consumer spending and geopolitical influences on commodity prices. *—PTI*

BEGINS IN JANUARY

India-UK revive talks for free trade agreement

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Dndia and the UK are set to rekindle negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) early next year, following a bilateral meeting between British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the G20 Summit in Brazil.

Starmer announced the resumption of trade talks, which initially began in January 2022. The previous 14th round of discussions stalled as both nations entered their general election cycles. Pending issues persist in both the goods and services sectors. India is advocating for enhanced access for skilled professionals in sectors such as IT and healthcare, alongside duty-free market access for numerous goods. Conversely, the UK is seeking significant reductions in import duties on items

PHOTO: PTI

like Scotch whisky, electric vehicles, and lamb, while also pursuing greater opportunities for its services in Indian markets, particularly in telecommunications and finance.

The FTA negotiations encompass 26 chapters, dealing with goods, services, investments, and intellectual property rights.

Bilateral trade between India and the UK surged to $21.34 billion in 2023-24, with India's exports to the UK increasing by 12.38 per cent in the first half of the year. *—PTI*

ADIOS ROARING JAGUAR

Jaguar unveils new logo ahead of EV launch

LONDON, 20 NOV

Jaguar, the British luxury carmaker owned by Tata Motors, revealed a new logo as part of its shift towards an electric-only future. The updated logo features a blend of upper and lower-case letters in "JaGUar," accompanied by a sleek "leaper" cat design, marking a dramatic departure from the brand's traditional emblem of a roaring jaguar head.

In addition to the refreshed logo, Jaguar has introduced the slogan "delete ordinary," signalling its commitment to innovation and originality as the brand looks to redefine itself for the electric era.

This move comes as Jaguar prepares for a relaunch, with plans to introduce three new electric vehicles (EVs) by 2026. The first of these will be an all-new sedan, inspired by the next-generation XF, which is expected to debut in 2025. The vehicle will feature futuristic design elements, including a boxy faux grille, distinctive double-barrel headlamps, and door-mounted side mirrors.

The updated logo features a blend of upper and lower-case letters in JaGUar *PHOTO: X*

Since 2021, Jaguar has been making strides in reshaping its identity, including halting the sale of new internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles. Managing Director Rawdon Glover emphasised that this move was a necessary "fire break" to distinguish the brand's legacy from its electric future. *—Salar News with Agencies*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Prime Minister of Australia Anthony Albanese during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rio De Janerio, Brazil, on Wednesday *PHOTO: PTI*

India, Aus firm up clean energy pact

RIO DE JANEIRO, 20 NOV

In a significant move to strengthen bilateral relations, India and Australia have established an ambitious Renewable Energy Partnership (REP) aimed at enhancing collaboration in key areas such as solar energy, green hydrogen, and energy storage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, announced the REP alongside discussions on a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) during the second annual India-Australia conclave held at the G20 summit.

The leaders expressed their commitment to deepening ties in defence, security, science, technology, and education, envisioning a long-term strategy for mutual strength and regional stability. Modi highlighted a remarkable 40 per cent increase in trade following the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) signed in 2022.

Both leaders stressed the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving global conflicts and reinforced their commitment to global institutional reforms. They welcomed Albanese's acceptance of an invitation to the Quad summit in India next year. With increasing concerns about China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, Modi and Albanese reiterated their dedication to an open and secure region, emphasising the necessity of upholding international law and freedom of navigation. The partnership aims to unlock economic growth and create jobs, positioning both countries as pivotal players in a rapidly evolving global landscape. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Raheja developers challenges insolvency

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Raheja Developers has appealed to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) following a ruling from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to initiate insolvency proceedings against the firm over non-delivery issues related to its Shilas project in Gurugram. The NCLT's ruling stemmed from a collective plea by over 40 flat allottees, who allege the company failed to deliver the project despite receiving payments totalling Rs112.90 crore.

On Tuesday, the NCLT admitted the claim and appointed an Interim Resolution Professional (IRP), halting the firm's board activities and placing it under a moratorium against creditors as stipulated by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. The IRP has been tasked with submitting a progress report on the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) by 22 January 2025.

Raheja's Chairman and Managing Director, Navin Raheja, argued that the delays were due to force majeure events outside the company's control, and contested the petition's validity, claiming the number of complainants represented less than 10 per cent of total buyers. *—PTI*

Nokia, Airtel sign multi-billion 5G deal

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Finnish telecom gear supplier Nokia has won a multi-year, multi-billion deal from Bharti Airtel to deploy 4G and 5G equipment across key Indian cities and states, a release said on Wednesday.

According to the contract, Nokia will deploy equipment from its 5G AirScale portfolio, including base stations, baseband units and the latest generation of Massive MIMO radios, all powered by its energy-efficient 'ReefShark System-on-Chip technology'.

These solutions will enhance Airtel's network with exceptional 5G capacity and coverage and support its network evolution. Nokia will also modernise Airtel's existing 4G network with multiband radios and baseband equipment, which can also support 5G.

PHOTO: PTI

Gopal Vittal, Vice Chairman and MD of Bharti Airtel said, "This strategic partnership with Nokia will future-proof our network infrastructure and provide customers with unparalleled user experience along with a network that will be eco-friendly to minimise environmental impact."

Pekka Lundmark, President and CEO of Nokia, said the strategic agreement further solidifies the company's footprint in India, as well as its long-standing collaboration with Airtel.

Nokia has collaborated with Airtel for over two decades, providing 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G network equipment. *—PTI*

Real estate equities to reach $11B

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Equity investments in Indian real estate are anticipated to surge by 49 per cent, reaching USD 11 billion this calendar year, driven by robust demand for properties, according to a joint report by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and real estate consultant CBRE.

In 2023, equity investments

PHOTO:X

in the sector stood at USD 7.4 billion. The report, titled 'Leading the Charge: Crafting the Skylines of Tomorrow,' was unveiled at the CII Realty 2024 conclave. From January to September 2024, equity capital inflows totalled USD 8.9 billion, a 46 per cent year-on-year increase, with domestic investors, predominantly developers, contributing nearly USD 6 billion—65 per cent of total inflows. *—PTI*

DIGITISATION DRIVE TRANSFORMED PDS SYSTEM, SAYS GOVT

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

In a significant development, India's Public Distribution System (PDS) has undergone a comprehensive digitisation overhaul, establishing new global standards for food security programmes, according to a statement issued by the Union Food Ministry on Wednesday.

The revamped PDS, which caters to over 806 million beneficiaries, has successfully eliminated 58 million fraudulent ration cards through the implementation of Aadhaar-based authentication and electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) verification. The ministry highlighted that these measures have led to a marked reduction in leakages and improved targeting of beneficiaries. As part of the digitisation initiative, nearly all 204 million ration cards have been digitised, with an impressive 99 million. *—PTI*

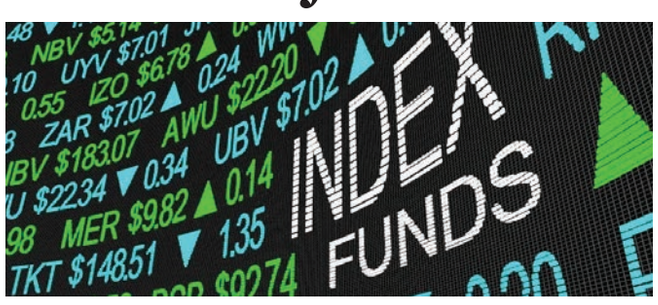
DRIVEN BY GENZ

India's investment shifts towards index funds

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

India's investment ecosystem is witnessing a transformative shift as index investing gains remarkable popularity, particularly among younger investors, according to a recent report by Motilal Oswal. The allure of index funds, preferred for their potential for better returns and ease of liquidity, resonates strongly with Gen Z and Millennials, with 46 per cent of younger investors favouring them compared to only 35 per cent of Gen X and Baby Boomers.

The survey reveals that Millennials and Gen X investors are increasingly interested in Factor or Smart Beta Funds, indicative of their enthusiasm for innovative investment strategies. In 2024, a whopping 80 per cent of investors have boosted their allocations to passive funds, a notable rise from 53 per cent the previous year.



Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) are also experiencing significant momentum *PHOTO: X*

Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) are also experiencing significant momentum, with 57 per cent of respondents investing in them, up from 41 per cent in 2023. Among these, 26 per cent exclusively invest in ETFs, while 31 per cent diversify their investments between ETFs and index funds. A substantial 81 per cent of investors express plans to hold their passive investments for over three years, reflecting a strong commitment to long-term growth.

Sectoral indices like Nifty IT and Nifty Bank are favoured by 67 per cent of passive fund investors, followed closely by benchmark indices such as Nifty 50 and Nifty 500 at 61 per cent. The combined Assets Under Management (AUM) of passive funds surged from Rs 7 lakh crore in September 2023 to over Rs 11 lakh crore by September 2024, highlighting a 1.5x growth within a year. This surge underscores the increasing confidence in index funds and ETFs, bolstered by technological advancements and improved financial literacy across the investor landscape. *—ANI*

Solar energy costs set to fall by 60% by 2050: ISA

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

A recent report from the International Solar Alliance (ISA) predicts that solar energy generation costs will drop by 40-60 per cent by 2050, driven by increasing demand and scalability. The findings position solar power as the most cost-effective and scalable renewable energy source, essential for a successful global energy transition.

The report highlights that the cost of consistent solar energy generation is set to decline significantly, which will help lower greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent and reduce electricity generation costs by up to 60 per cent by mid-century. It also forecasts the creation of 27 million green jobs globally by 2050,

PHOTO: PTI

markedly benefiting women and marginalised communities.

In low-income countries, solar energy could bridge energy access gaps for over a billion people through both grid-connected and decentralised solutions. The report underscores the necessity for targeted policies and technological innovations to transition to green energy. *—PTI*

'Setback after withdrawal from Blind T20 WC'

NEW DELHI, 20 NOV

Captain Durga Rao Tompaki on Wednesday said it is disheartening to miss out on the chance to compete in the T20 Blind Cricket World Cup in Pakistan following India's withdrawal from the tournament while the national federation described the development as a "setback". The Indian team withdrew from the tournament after the government denied permission to travel to Pakistan due to security concerns. The Indian team was supposed to cross the Wagah border on Wednesday for the event, scheduled to begin on Saturday. "We play with passion, and we represent our country with immense pride. We have always looked forward to competing at the biggest stage, and it is disheartening to miss out on this opportunity," Tompaki said in a media release. "However, we know that the next World Cup is just around the corner, and we remain committed to our training and preparation."—*PTI*

Billie Jean King Cup: Slovakia beats Britain 2-1

MALAGA, 20 NOV

Slovakia rallied to beat Britain 2-1 and reach its first Billie Jean King Cup final in more than two decades. Viktoria Hruncakova and Tereza Mihalikova defeated Olivia Nicholls and Heather Watson 6-2, 6-2 in the decisive doubles match, putting Slovakia back in the final for the first time since 2002 to face last year's runner-up Italy on Wednesday. "Absolutely special moment for our country, for our players, for tennis in Slovakia," captain Matej Liptak said. "It's so many years since we won it once only. But today it's really real, and we are just one step from the maybe biggest victory of our team or team members. We will try to enjoy it." Britain was trying to reach the final of the women's team event for the first time in more than four decades.—*PTI*

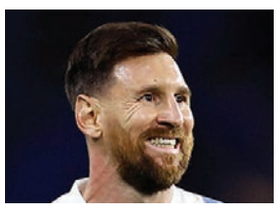


PHOTO: X

Messi likely to play in Kerala: Sports Minister

T'PURAM, 20 NOV

Kerala Sports Minister V Abdurahiman on Wednesday revealed that the Argentina football team, including legendary player Lionel Messi, will visit the state next year for an international match. Addressing a press conference here, the minister stated that the match would be conducted under the complete supervision of the state government. "All the financial assistance for organising this high-profile football event will be provided by the merchants of the state," the minister said, expressing confidence in Kerala's ability to host the historic occasion.—*PTI*

Hardik reclaims top spot among T20I all-rounders

DUBAI, 20 NOV

Star India player Hardik Pandya on Wednesday re-claimed the top spot in theT20I all-rounders' list while rising star and teammate Tilak Varma made amassive jump of 69 rungs to occupy the third place among batters in the latestICC men's player rankings. Pandya overtookEngland dasher Liam Livingstone and Nepal dynamo Dipendra Singh Airee at thetop of the T20I all-rounder charts on the back of some strong form duringIndia's recent series in South Africa, with the 31-year-old producing someeye-catching efforts with both bat and ball.His innings of 39 notout in the second game of the four-match series helped balance India's innings —*PTI*

Happy that Cheteshwar Pujara isn't here: Hazlewood

There is a quiet hunger in the squad to wrest the trophy back

PERTH, 20 NOV

The Indian team for the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy is not the same that won the last two editions of the Test series Down Under. While Ajinkya Rahane, who led India to a historic win on the last trip to Australia, is no longer a part of the recent setup, another major missing will Cheteshwar Pujara who had haunted the Aussies with his batting, especially in the tour of 2018-19.

Josh Hazlewood seemed happy with the pitch on offer here at the Optus Stadium. "I love playing here in Perth, the wicket is always a nice one to bowl pace on, bouncy, perhaps a few cracks later in the game.

There is a quiet hunger in the squad to wrest the trophy back as Australia has often emerged second best to India since the 2016-17 series and Hazlewood reiterated that: There are only a couple of us from the series we won 2-0 way back in 2014-15. So everyone is determined."

Cheteshwar Pujara will not be a part of the BGT 2024-25 PHOTO: PTI

Following a spell of unusual rain

WACA head curator Isaac McDonald on Wednesday said the unusual rain in Perth has impacted the pitch preparation for the first Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and though he doesn't expect the surface to develop "snake cracks", there will still be plenty of bounce and carry. The surface at the Optus Stadium or the nearby WACA ground is known for its pace and bounce and when the cracks open up in dry conditions, it provides more assistance to the seamers besides bringing the spinners into play.The city has witnessed rain over the past few days and the pitch was covered for the whole day on Tuesday, cutting down preparation time for the curator.

Competition between Indian players for fielding: T Dilip

India's fielding coach T Dilip revealed on Wednesday that he prefers organising fielding competitions between groups of players at the start of training sessions as it helps set the right tone.

Set to take on Australia in a five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy here from Friday, India has tried to maximize their training sessions and match simulations ahead of the opening Test. Dilip, who has been retained as India's fielding coach under new head coach Gautam Gambhir, said his experience has helped him identify the right process to enhance the team's preparation."By now, I get a sense of the team and how they work around," he said in a video shared by BCCI. "That is why I always prefer (to go with) a little competition first to start with so after the warm-up they kick off (the training session) having the fun, laughter (and) getting together. —*PTI*

CHINA MASTERS

PV Sindhu registers 20th win against Busanan

SHENZHEN, 20 NOV

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu continued her dominant run against Busanan Ongbamrungphan, defeating the Thai shuttler in straight games to advance to the second round of the China Masters tournament on Wednesday.

World number 19 Sindhu dispatched the higher-ranked Busanan 21-17 21-19 in 50 minutes in the first round of the Super 750 event.

This was Sindhu's 20th win against the world number 11 in 21 meetings.

Both shuttlers started off the match on an even keel with Busanan taking a 14-10 lead thanks to two unforced errors by the Indian.

However, Sindhu went on a roll, winning the next nine points to take a 19-14 lead before closing the first game in her favor.

But the loss in the first game didn't deter Busanan as she started the second game strongly. Although Sindhu trailed for most of the second game, she continued to chip away at the points deficit with her aggressive play to take the lead for the first time in the game at 18-17. The star Indian shuttler promptly sealed the match. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S ACT TITLE

Indian players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Women's Asian Champions Trophy 2024, at Rajgir, in Nalanda district, Bihar, Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

India beat Olympic silver medallist China 1-0 in final

RAJGIR, 20 NOV

The Indian women managed to overcome the disappointment of a pedestrian semifinal performance and upped their game when it mattered most, registering a 1-0 win against China in the final to successfully defend the Asian Champions Trophy at the Rajgir Sports Complex on Wednesday.

The scoreline may indicate it was a close contest and for the first half, it was so before the Indians, like in every game, shifted gears in the third quarter and took control.

And while China deserved credit for not making it any easier for India, the host was not troubled much once they went ahead. Deservedly, it was Deepika, who topped the tables with 11 goals through the tournament and was named Player of the Tournament, who scored the lone goal of the match for India.Unlike previously, it was a cautious start by India, aware that the Chinese would come hard, come fast, and create chances early on.

They did and for the first few minutes, India had to fight hard to survive the Chinese onslaught before slowly settling down, and getting better at ball control.

A penalty corner for China in the 18th minute saw Lalremsiami adjudged player of the match rush out quickly before Bichhu Devi went full stretch to clear the rebound with her stick.India's constant push resulted in four quick penalty corners in the 20th minute but India's poor form with PCs continued, a mix of off-target shots, ineffective variations, and some good saves by the Chinese goalkeeper.China managed a 2nd penalty corner three minutes later but to no avail. But the Indians were slowly growing in the game and within seconds of resumption in the 3rd quarter, India earned its 5th penalty corner. The injection was not stopped cleanly but the ball was kept in play, dragged in, and then Deepika unleashed a controlled reverse hit that the Chinese defense and goalkeeper had no answer to. The Indian attack was impressive even when it did not result in a goal. —*PTI*

Nayanika takes one-shot leader over Hitaashee

HYDERABAD, 20 NOV

Nayanika Sanga, looking for her maiden win on the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, carded a solid four-under 68 to take a slender one-shot lead after the opening day in the 15th and final leg of the Tour here on Wednesday.

Nayanika, 20, had seven birdies, including three in a row on the back nine from the 11th to the 13th at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club.She had one shot edge over last week's winners, Hitaashee Bakshi (69) and Jasmine Shekar (69). Four players, Amandeep Drall, Gaurika Bishnoi, and Sneha Singh, alongside Sri Lankan amateur Kaya Daluwatte were tied for fourth place with cards of 2-under 70 each. Nayanika, who turned pro in 2022, had an early bogey

Nayanika Sanga PHOTO: PTI

on the second, but birdies on the fourth and the eighth ensured she turned in one-under.A bogey on the tenth pulled her back to even par, but a hat-trick of birdies from the 11th to the 13th and two more on the 15th and 18th with a bogey in between on the 16th saw her finish at 68.

Hitaashee had a bogey early on the second but birdies on the fifth, seventh, and ninth holes saw her turn in a healthy 2-under 34. —*PTI*

Argentina beats Peru to close in on World Cup spot

BUENOS AIRES, 20 NOV

Lautaro Martínez's goal gave Argentina a 1-0 win over Peru in a South American qualifying match in Buenos Aires and left the hosts close to a spot in the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico, and Canada.

Its main continental rivals Brazil drew 1-1 against Uruguay in Salvador, Brazil with two impressive goals in an otherwise lackluster match. Federico Valverde gave Uruguay the lead with a curled shot from the edge of the box, and Gerson netted his first for Brazil similarly at the Arena Fonte Nova.

Argentina leads South American qualifying with 25 points from 12 matches. —*PTI*

Karan sails into second round at ITF

KALABURAGI, 20 NOV

Fourth seed Karan Singh of India survived early jitters to beat compatriot Aditya Balsekar to enter the second round of the ITF Kalaburagi Open here on Wednesday.

Karan had to fight hard in the first set before winning it in tie-breaker 7-6 (3), but he found his rhythm in the second set to bag it 6-0 with three service breaks.

Later, local man SD Prajwal Dev recovered well from last evening's defeat in the doubles with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Japan's Kazuki Nishiwaki and set up a second-round showdown with second-seeded Bogdan Bobrov of Russia.

PHOTO: PTI

After trading breaks early, Prajwal broke Nishiwaki in the sixth and eighth games to take the opening set.

In the second set, the Japanese came back strongly by breaking the Indian in the third game.

But after a momentary lapse in concentration, Prajwal broke right back in the fourth, and again in the sixth game to sail through to the second round.

Barring third-seeded Egor Agafonov's retirement due to an ankle injury in the second set against Sidharth Rawat, the rest of the seeded players sailed through to the second round.

Results: Singles: (Round 1, Indians unless mentioned): SD Prajwal Dev beat Kazuki Nishiwaki (Jpn) 6-2, 6-3; Rishab Agarwal beat Adil Kalyanpur 6-3, 5-7, 6-3; 8-Maxim Zhukov (Rus) beat Rishi Reddy 6-2, 7-5; Anthony Susanto (Ina) beat Priyanshu Choudhary 6-1, 6-7 (8-10), 7-6 (8-6); Sidharth Rawat beat 3-Egor Agafonov (Rus). —*PTI*

CAREER MARKED BY BIG TROPHIES

A look at Rafael Nadal's 22 Grand Slam titles

MALAGA, 20 NOV

Rafael Nadal showed up at the French Open for the first time as a teenager in 2005 and left as the champion. He won it for the final time in 2022 at age 36 his last major championship anywhere. As Nadal, now 38, gets set to head into retirement after Spain was eliminated by the Netherlands in the Davis Cup quarterfinals Tuesday night, here is a look at his 22 major triumphs, starting with the most recent: No. 22: 2022 French OpenFinal: Beat Casper Ruud 6-3, 6-3, 6-0.

What He Did: Improved to 14-0 in French Open finals after getting nerve-dulling injections in his left foot.

What He Said:

"It's obvious that with the circumstances that I am playing (in), I can't and I don't want to keep going." No. 21: 2022 Australian OpenFinal: Beat Daniil Medvedev 2-6, 6-7 (5), 6-4, 6-4, 7-5.

What He Did: Became the first man in 57 years to win an Australian Open final after dropping the first two sets.

What He Said:

"I just wanted to keep believing till the end."

No. 20: 2020 French OpenFinal: Beat Novak Djokovic 6-0, 6-2, 7-5

What He Did: Pulled even with rival Federer at 20 Slam titles. Won the French Open without dropping a set for the fourth time.

What He Said: "In terms of these records, of course I care."

No. 19: 2019 U.S. OpenFinal: Beat Medvedev 7-5, 6-3, 5-7, 4-6, 6-4.

What He Did:

Became the first man to win majors after turning 30. No. 18: 2019 French OpenFinal: Beat Dominic Thiem 6-3, 5-7, 6-1, 6-1

What He Did: Became the first tennis player to win any Slam tournament a dozen times. No. 17: 2018 French OpenFinal: Beat Thiem 6-4, 6-3, 6-2 What He Did: Got past Thiem, the only man to beat Nadal on clay in 2017 or 2018.

What He Said: "If you tell me seven, eight years ago, that I will be here ... having this trophy with me again, I will tell you that is something almost impossible. But here we are." No. 16: 2017 U.S. OpenFinal: Beat Kevin Anderson 6-3, 6-3, 6-4

What He Did:

Won his second major title of the season following a 2 1/2-year drought without an appearance in a major final.

What He Said: "After a couple of years without competing at this very high, high level, very happy to be back."

No. 15: 2017 French OpenFinal: Beat Stan Wawrinka 6-2, 6-3, 6-1

What He Did:

Won every set and dropped just 35 games in the tournament.

What He Said: "A perfect Roland Garros for me."

No. 14: 2014 French OpenFinal: Beat Djokovic 3-6, 7-5, 6-2, 6-4

What He Did: Won a record fifth French Open in a row and pulled even with Pete Sampras at 14 career Slam titles. No. 13: 2013 U.S. OpenFinal: Beat Djokovic 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1.

What He Did: Improved to 60-3 with 10 titles that year. What He Said: "This season is probably the most emotional one in my career." No. 12: 2013 French OpenFinal: Beat David Ferrer 6-3, 6-2, 6-3

What He Did: Came back from an injured left knee that sidelined him for more than six months.

What He Said: "I never like to compare years, but it's true that this year means something very special for me." No. 11: 2012 French OpenFinal: Beat Djokovic 6-4, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5.

What He Did:

Won a rain-interrupted, two-day title match to break Bjorn Borg's men's record of six titles in Paris and prevent Djokovic from winning a fourth consecutive major championship.

What He Said: "My mental part, probably, on clay is one of the most important things." No. 10: 2011 French OpenFinal: Beat Roger Federer 7-5, 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-1

What He Did: Improved to 4-0 against Federer in French Open finals. No. 9: 2010 U.S. OpenFinal: Beat Djokovic 6–4, 5–7, 6–4, 6–2

What He Did: Earned a third consecutive Slam trophy and first in New York, completing a career Grand Slam. No. 8: 2010 WimbledonFinal: Beat Tomas Berdych 6-3, 7-5, 6-4.

What He Did: Swept the French Open and Wimbledon in one season for the second time; couldn't defend his 2009 title at the All England Club because of a knee problem.

What He Said:

"If you want to play well, (you're) going to find a way."

No. 7: 2010 French OpenFinal: Beat Robin Soderling 6-4, 6-2, 6-4

What He Did: Didn't drop a set; capped it off by defeating Soderling, who handed Nadal his first French Open loss a year earlier.

What He Said: "I'm back."No. 6: 2009 Australian OpenFinal: Beat Federer 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (3), 3-6, 6-2

What He Did:

Picked up his third win in a row over Federer in major finals. No. 5: 2008 WimbledonFinal: Beat Federer 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-7 (8), 9-7. What He Did: Won a thriller that ended with the light fading to claim a major other than the French Open for the first time and prevent Federer from earning a sixth consecutive Wimbledon title.

What He Said: "He deserved this title, too." No. 4: 2008 French OpenFinal: Beat Federer 6-1, 6-3, 6-0

What He Did: The most lopsided French Open men's final since 1977 allowed Nadal to become the first man since Borg in 1980 to win the event without dropping a set.

What He Said:

"I am humble, but the numbers are the numbers." No. 3: 2007 French OpenFinal: Beat Federer 6-3, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

What He Did: Saved 16 of 17 break points and became only the second man since 1914 with three consecutive French Open trophies.

What He Said: "I am very happy, but I am really sad for Roger." No. 2: 2006 French OpenFinal: Beat Federer 1-6, 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 (4).

What He Did:

Ended Federer's 27-match Grand Slam winning streak and handed him his first loss in a major final (Federer had been 7-0).

What He Said:

"A bit of luck, a bit of tennis, a bit of mental attitude." No. 1: 2005 French OpenFinal: Beat Mariano Puerta 6-7 (6), 6-3, 6-1, 7-5

What He Did: Two days after turning 19, Nadal became the first man to win the French Open in his debut since Mats Wilander in 1982. —*AP*

Rafael Nadal played on tour for more than two decades